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General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

50th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 13 November 2001, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Leo A. Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Leo A. Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Leo A. Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Falcam: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election. My Government hails the selection of a leader with such esteemed qualifications, and we are confident you will lead the work of this body with the same high competence and spirit as did your distinguished predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland. We also share the pride felt by every Member of this body in the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations Organization and to its highly admired Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. We take great satisfaction in his re-election to another term, especially in this critical period.

Words cannot describe the horror of my people at the tragic event which unfolded here in New York, in Washington and other locations in September — and the one yesterday. On behalf of my people, please allow me to reiterate our deepest and most sincere condolences to the Government of the United States and to the victims and their families from all over the world. Our resolve to combat international terrorism is unwavering. My country will stand ready to assist in any way it can in order to help bring those responsible for these heinous acts to justice and to ease the suffering of those affected by their actions.

The recently completed special debate on terrorism by this body makes it clear that we are all brothers in this fight, with a shared determination to do what it takes to eradicate this blight on civilization. But, despite the great sadness in all our hearts over the recent and ongoing events, the regular work of this body cannot be derailed. Part of winning this battle is to demonstrate the commitment and capacity of this body to carry on with the great work of the Charter and on all sides.

Thus, in addition to other actions that are being taken to confront the current crisis, I call upon all Member States to ratify and bring into force as soon as possible the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, which was adopted by a resolution of the General Assembly on 9 December 1999. I signed this important Convention yesterday on behalf of the Federated States of Micronesia, and I anticipate its prompt ratification by our Congress.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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I take pleasure in saying that this year marks the tenth anniversary of the Federated States of Micronesia's membership in the United Nations. In those 10 years, my nation and the world at large have undergone unprecedented change. With the assistance of the United Nations system, the Micronesian people have worked tirelessly to forge our own identity at the international level.

Fifteen years ago, we entered into a relationship of Free Association with the United States of America. It is a relationship largely unprecedented in international relations. This arrangement was subject to great scrutiny by the United Nations, which ultimately approved the end of our status as a United Nations Trust Territory. It is testimony to the efforts of this body and the United Nations system that I stand before you today as the representative of a nation — an equal in the community of nations.

For hundreds of years, our culture was isolated from the rest of the world. In the past 10 years, our membership in the United Nations has opened up new horizons, new partnerships and a new understanding of peoples. We also note our appreciation for the special knowledge we have gained through our interactions with all of you here in this forum and elsewhere in the United Nations system.

In the past 10 years, the world, like Micronesia itself, has changed at a pace heretofore unknown. Although we may celebrate some victories in conflict prevention, clearly, other grave challenges remain, and new threats to international peace and security have emerged. We are encouraged at seeing the United Nations assert its leadership in combating these problems.

The past year has brought an ambitious slate of new United Nations initiatives to enhance the well-being of peoples throughout the world. There are far more noteworthy new initiatives than I have time to mention here. But please allow me to highlight a few of them.

While the effects of some grave threats to the Federated States of Micronesia will gradually manifest themselves over the coming decades, my nation is currently grappling with an ongoing and immediate concern: poverty. I am not speaking of the poverty of hunger and unchecked disease, but of the all-too-common developing world condition that has resulted from the persistent failure of all nations to achieve equal and equitable sharing of the world's bounties. Unfortunately, we are not alone, but this provides little solace. We applaud the United Nations as it continues its heroic work to reduce poverty and to bring a better standard of living to all peoples of the world. We will continue to work with our colleagues within the Group of 77 and China to further poverty reduction measures and to improve the standard of living of all humankind.

The historic isolation of the Federated States of Micronesia has sheltered us from the scourge of many communicable diseases, such as AIDS. Our integration with the world community has brought about change here as well. In this past year my country experienced its first domestic case of HIV infection. This is minor in comparison to the experience of those countries that have been devastated by the disease, but it is cause for concern, nonetheless, in a country of little more than 100,000 people. We wholeheartedly support United Nations initiatives in this regard, such as the recently concluded General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS.

Traditional conflicts remain and, most troubling, many old animosities have spilled over into open hostilities. This serves to underscore the importance of United Nations initiatives, such as this year's World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which recently concluded in Durban, South Africa.

After many years of overall peace and tranquillity, our region of the Pacific islands has recently seen a few long-standing conflicts erupt into violence of disturbing proportions. We applaud the efforts of the United Nations aimed at arriving at peaceful settlements, and the Federated States of Micronesia lends its full support to ongoing measures designed to keep the peace.

In the Pacific, one of the most effective means to that end has always been the Pacific Islands Forum. In the 30 years of its existence, the Pacific Islands Forum has played a pivotal role in maintaining the peace and security of our region. It has also contributed to notable progress on a broad slate of economic and social issues. I was pleased to participate in the recent meeting of the Forum and can express my country's full support for this year's communiqué, which has been issued as a document of this session of the General Assembly.

As a nation with one of the youngest populations in the world, the issues of children and youth are of utmost concern to us. We therefore commend the decision to hold the special session of the General Assembly on children. We understand fully the need to reschedule it and are gratified that the Assembly has decided to hold this session next May in order to give the issues of children and youth the prominence they deserve. On a related note, I am pleased to report that the Federated States of Micronesia has begun the process of evaluation with a view to signing and ratifying the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Given the monumental pace of change, it is not surprising that in some respects the United Nations itself has been unable to keep pace with developments. We are appreciative of ongoing reform efforts, but we would encourage redoubled efforts on remaining matters that cry out for attention, such as the reconstitution of the Security Council.

While my nation grapples with the entire spectrum of transnational problems, such as drug trafficking and other aspects of international criminal activity, there is one threat that has our special attention. I am speaking, of course, about the accelerated rise in sea level caused by global climate change. We now know that the production of greenhouse gases by human activity plays a prominent role. It is this global issue that threatens my country's future as no other.

The Federated States of Micronesia contributes only in an infinitesimal way to the problem of human-induced climate change; yet we are among the "front-line" States that must deal with its impacts. We are comprised of a geologically diverse range of islands, from low-level coral atolls to mountainous volcanic outcrops. All share one common denominator — since the dawn of time, our people's livelihood has been tied to the sea. Even on our high islands, such as Pohnpei and Kosrae, the vast majority of the population on all islands lives in the coastal plain. On most islands, the possibility of moving to higher ground does not exist.

The distinguished scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have confirmed that the climate is changing and that human activities are playing a significant part in the warming of our planet. Credible scientific evidence suggests that the magnitude of the impact of that warming may be greater than even the most extreme estimates just 10 years ago. Indeed, it may already be too late to save my country and many others like it worldwide.

Already, our region has seen the beginnings of the movement of its peoples as a result of the rise in sea level caused by global warming. This year, Tuvalu, one of our similarly situated neighbours in the region, announced that it had begun examining relocation options. Unfortunately, its initial results were not encouraging, as there is no uniform willingness among more fortunate countries to provide a haven for these first "climate change refugees". Undoubtedly, it will be the outlying atolls of the Federated States of Micronesia, home to about half of our population, that are among the next to join the people of Tuvalu if current trends continue.

These developments point with new urgency to the need for constructive discussion of adaptation strategies and funding for small island developing States. We are encouraged by the new attention paid to these issues at the recent conference in Bonn, and we welcome the constructive outcomes of the conference just completed in Marrakesh with regard to such important issues as the enforcement of compliance.

We and all other parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, signed nine years ago, were motivated by the "precautionary principle", whereby the lack of airtight scientific certainty could not be the basis for inaction. Today, virtually no uncertainty remains as to the reality of the main problem. Yet we are dismayed to see that in the media and elsewhere a handful of "greenhouse gas sceptics" are often still given a podium equal to that given to the distinguished scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

In the past 10 years we have seen some progress in the form of the Framework Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, thanks to the tireless efforts of many delegations and good will on the part of Governments. However, a change in the position of several key signatories to the Protocol, which are also among the world's largest generators of greenhouse gases, undermines the success of the recent Bonn and Marrakesh talks, and has created a great deal of concern on the part of all low-lying island States. We warmly applaud those countries that have stood by their commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We call upon those that have not to find the political will to take the actions that are, after all, in their own long-term best interests.

I do not mean to ignore the initial economic hardships these changes might entail; we understand them all too well. In the last five years, the Federated States of Micronesia has taken unprecedented measures to reduce the size of its public sector, far and away the largest employer in my country. These moves were vastly unpopular politically. Still, they were necessary and have put us on the right footing for a sustainable economic future. Similarly, longer-term economic benefits and competitive advantage can be gained by those nations that adopt a progressive climate change strategy.

We Micronesians are a proud people. Throughout the centuries, we have endured seemingly insurmountable difficulties. The threat from climate change is only the latest of these. Like some others we have faced, it is not of our own making, and it is not something that we can overcome by ourselves. The Kyoto Protocol, as it has been hammered out in Marrakesh, provides a necessary mechanism with which most nations can begin to attack global warming. I congratulate the negotiators on their significant, even historic, accomplishment. The emission cuts agreed to, however, amount to only a small first step.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate the sincere condolences of the people of the Federated States of Micronesia to those in all regions of the world who are suffering today from violence, poverty, terrorism and the violation of human rights. We pray for a peaceful end to the current conflicts raging throughout many regions.

We are reassured that the spirit and principles of the United Nations will guide leaders as they strive to prevent future outbreaks of violence while seeking to relieve current suffering. My delegation is proud of its contributions during our first 10 years of membership and pledges to do its utmost to continue to advance the goals of the United Nations for the betterment of all people throughout the world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Leo A. Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lacayo (*spoke in Spanish*): Before I proceed, allow me, on behalf of the people and the Government of Nicaragua, to express our sorrow to the people and the Government of the Dominican Republic for yesterday's event. Allow me also, Mr. President, to join those who have come before me in congratulating you on your well-deserved election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, and to express my confidence that under your competent direction this session will conclude its work successfully. I also wish to express our most profound appreciation for the praiseworthy work achieved by the outgoing President, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland.

Likewise, I wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, not only for having been re-elected to a second mandate with the consensus of the entire international community, but also for the recent, well-deserved, high distinction of being awarded, together with the United Nations, the Nobel Peace Prize.

The people and the Government of Nicaragua received with great concern the news of the criminal terrorist attacks against the people and the Government of the United States on 11 September. Since then, we have offered our solidarity and cooperation to the people and the Government of the United States for the capture and punishment of all those involved in those abhorrent acts. The magnitude of those terrorist acts brings new and diverse challenges in the political, economic and security areas. The enemies of peace and democracy have attempted to create a widespread

climate of uncertainty and fear. For this reason, our first challenge is not to allow ourselves to be intimidated or paralysed by their criminal threats and actions.

At the Central American level, on 19 September in Honduras, the Presidents of the isthmus adopted a Declaration entitled "Central America united against terrorism", in which we strongly condemned any ties between groups or sectors in the Central American region and international terrorism. As of that date, we began to undertake concrete initiatives aimed at improving information systems between neighbouring countries; increasing coordination between air and naval forces to deal with illicit traffic; ensuring better border monitoring; enabling the exchange of information between specialized public security agencies; increasing control over travel documents; and strengthening security for airports and civil aviation.

Nicaragua is a party to those measures and provisions that promote and safeguard international and regional peace and security through the prevention and peaceful resolution of disputes between States and the non-proliferation of nuclear and conventional weapons of mass destruction, which contravene the principles of international humanitarian law.

Our firm commitment to world peace and security led my country to host the Third Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, despite the fact that that meeting took place soon after the events of 11 September. The Managua Conference allowed the States parties to renew their commitment and to note with satisfaction the important progress that has been made in the crusade to eliminate anti-personnel landmines. The ratification of the Convention by more than 120 States; the strengthening of the mechanisms for its implementation; the progress in mine removal; the destruction of mines stockpiled in different parts of the world; and the virtual embargo on the international trade in these weapons are concrete steps in our effort to end the suffering brought about by antipersonnel mines.

I would like to earnestly appeal to the States that have not yet done so to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as the Convention for the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines. Nicaragua also welcomes with satisfaction the Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, adopted on 21 July.

Just one year ago, we convened the Millennium Summit, at which we made commitments designed to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century and reaffirmed our faith in the United Nations as the central instrument for promoting peace, security, prosperity and justice.

In order to respond effectively to the challenges that the new millennium imposes on us — challenges that cannot be ignored — it is crucial that we take resolute steps to reform the United Nations, ensuring that its policies and structures are commensurate with the realities and aspirations of contemporary international society. Nicaragua shares the interest of all Member States in strengthening our Organization so as to optimize its work in the maintenance of international peace and security, conflict prevention, the promotion of sustainable development and the battle against poverty.

In this context, it is crucial to move forward with reform of the Security Council so that that body can respond fully and effectively to current needs and to future challenges to our peoples.

Furthermore, the profound changes experienced by societies throughout the world since 1945 require the United Nations urgently to reaffirm its universal vocation as a fundamental prerequisite for confronting new challenges through the full and effective participation of all peoples, without distinction and excluding no one.

However, this universal vocation cannot be fully realized as long as a democratic State and signatory of the San Francisco Charter is unable to participate as a full-fledged Member within the United Nations system. As is well known, the Republic of China is a democratic country, and its freely and transparently elected Government is the only one that can legitimately represent the interests and desires of the people of Taiwan at the United Nations. We should not continue to deny the 23 million people who live in the Republic of China the right to be represented in the United Nations and to share with us the efforts to promote peace and development for future generations.

Let us recall that the Republic of China has played a positive role in the promotion of world trade, the eradication of poverty and the advancement of

human rights. These laudable efforts at the national and international levels must be recognized by the United Nations; the Republic of China should be given the right to integrate itself into the international order of the United Nations, having fulfilled the basic conditions in accordance with international law.

Since the beginning of my mandate in 1997, we Nicaraguans have taken significant steps in the important task of consolidating democracy and guiding our country along the path of development. The Nicaraguan people have made great sacrifices in laying the foundations of sustainable human development by strengthening the rule of law; stabilizing the economy through the implementation of responsible financial and fiscal policies; providing for the effective participation of civil society in national decision-making; and formulating a long-term strategy in the battle against poverty and for reducing economic, social and environmental vulnerability. That process, however, has not been easy, because of the heavy burden of our external national debt, international financial crises, the fall in the price of our main export products and natural disasters.

The elections held in my country on 4 November will go down in national history as an example of transparency, public spirit and profound democratic conviction. The orderly and transparent way in which the process unfolded, broad citizen participation, with fewer than 10 per cent of the population failing to take part, and the attitude of the people of Nicaragua reflect of the degree to which my country has progressed in strengthening its democratic institutions.

We strongly support the convening of the World Summit on Sustainable Development to take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2002, the task of which will be to determine the current status of the implementation of the commitments undertaken at the Earth Summit. As a reflection of that will, we note our ratification of the Conventions on Climate Change and Biological Diversity, the efforts carried out by the National Council for Sustainable Development and Nicaragua's participation in major projects for the preservation of the rich ecosystems of the region, such as the Meso-American Biological Corridor and the Atlantic Biological Corridor.

The new problems and challenges that humanity faces greatly exceed our individual capabilities as States. For that reason, it is imperative that we renew our commitment to the goals and principles of the United Nations, which will allow us to continue to advance in the building of a world that is more just, peaceful and secure for future generations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Nambar Enkhbayar, Prime Minister of Mongolia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Mongolia.

Mr. Nambar Enkhbayar, Prime Minister of Mongolia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Nambar Enkhbayar, Prime Minister of Mongolia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Enkhbayar (Mongolia): At the outset, I wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, upon his unanimous re-election. The Nobel Peace Prize conferred upon the United Nations and its Secretary-General testifies to the broad recognition of the increasing role played by the world Organization in promoting peace, security and development and vests in it, at the same time, greater responsibility and trust in meeting both the existing and evolving global challenges.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the international community is drawn together more closely in the face of the unprecedented task of developing an effective response to the challenge of terrorism. The people and Government of Mongolia have resolutely condemned the barbaric attacks of 11 September as a deliberate act of terrorism against freedom and democracy — an attack against all humanity and expressed its full support for the collective efforts of the anti-terrorist coalition. From this high rostrum, I wish to reaffirm Mongolia's strong commitment to our common

struggle against the scourge of terrorism. I wish, on behalf of the Government of Mongolia, to reiterate our profound sympathy to the people and Government of the United States of America and to all the families that have been affected by this tragic event. I also express my condolences to New Yorkers and to the Governments of the United States of America and the Dominican Republic over the tragic accident that took place yesterday here in New York.

The response of the international community to the terrorist attacks has clearly demonstrated its firm resolve to collectively fight this global scourge. In this respect, Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) of 28 September is a timely measure, unprecedented both in its scope and nature. It has laid the groundwork for practical measures to be taken by all Member States in the fight against terrorism and established an effective mechanism to monitor its implementation. My Government is taking every necessary measure to implement the provisions of the resolution and the relevant report to that effect was submitted to the counter-terrorism Committee of the Security Council on 10 November.

I wish also to inform the Assembly that Mongolia signed yesterday the 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. With its ratification in the near future, Mongolia will be party to all the United Nations anti-terrorism conventions applicable to it. We also believe that, in light of recent events, the existing international legal framework on terrorism ought to be further strengthened through the speedy conclusion of a comprehensive convention against international terrorism and a convention against nuclear terrorism, preferably at this session of the General Assembly. In the same vein, the pace of setting up the International Criminal Court must be accelerated.

In order to put the anti-terrorist strategy in the right perspective, it would seem important to us to see the problem in a wider setting, that is, to address issues that provide a fertile soil for terrorism, such as transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, money laundering, illegal arms trafficking and others. The United Nations, in our view, is uniquely positioned to meet such a challenge and to develop a comprehensive strategy to uproot international terrorism through global and concerted action.

The events of 11 September have drastically changed the world as we see it. It has revealed the heightened vulnerability of the human family. It has also revealed, in no uncertain terms, the need for change in our approach to the way we perceive our own security. In this regard, the concept of human security, which places the safety, security and well-being of a human being at the heart of the matter, deserves our utmost attention. We see the prime merit of the human security concept to be that it addresses in a comprehensive manner the three-tiered freedom outlined in the Millennium Declaration: freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in a healthier and cleaner environment.

In the emerging era of globalization, it is becoming increasingly evident that no country can ensure its security on its own. This indivisibility of global human security requires a genuine display of solidarity and collective responsibility on the part of every country of the international community so that it can effectively address the formidable challenges at the turn of the new millennium.

After several decades of development efforts, the number of the world's poor remains at an embarrassingly high level. Exclusion, marginalization and inequality among and within countries are being further exacerbated by both existing and evolving transboundary threats.

Looking back, one could describe the decade of the 1990s as a decade of commitments for development, with a series of international conferences and summits resulting in important declarations and plans of action. Yet today, the world finds itself in many respects in no better shape. The legitimate question arises: Why? Does the international community, increasingly seen as a single human family living in a shared global village, have the capacity to redress this situation? Technically, the right answer seems to be yes. There are resources — financial, human and technological — to ensure a better life. On the other hand, one has to admit also that the underlying reasons could be manifold, as the changes undergone and challenges faced by the world over the last decade are indeed complex both in nature and in scope.

Yet, we cannot but agree with the Secretary-General that

> "The widening gap between goals and achievements implies that the international community has failed to deliver on crucial commitments it made during the 1990s". (*A/56/326, para. 81*)

The real, hard question is then: Do we have the sufficient political will and sense of solidarity to forge the genuine partnership needed to erase the staggering discrepancy between commitments and action? In the final analysis, the answer to this question has to be affirmative and has to be supported by practical, meaningful action. We cannot afford to fail to honour for yet another decade our commitments if we are serious about ensuring human security. We cannot afford to fail to implement the far-reaching yet achievable targets set by the Millennium Summit last year. Our failure could be used as a justification for deadly acts by those who pose a threat to humanity. Let us therefore make the first decade of this new century one of implementation and cooperation for a safer, healthier and better world. Additional efforts are urgently required, and affluent countries could exhibit their solidarity and shared responsibility by further opening their markets, providing broader and faster debt relief and giving more and better-focused development assistance and incentives for foreign direct investment flows to their less fortunate partners.

We must mobilize the political will necessary to make the upcoming conferences on financing for development, sustainable development and food security a success. The lead-up to these important events and the conferences themselves are to take into consideration the special needs of small, vulnerable and structurally disadvantaged economies so as to enable them to integrate into the multilateral trading system and take advantage of the opportunities offered by the advance of globalization. We also believe that the international ministerial meeting on transit transport cooperation, to be held in 2003, is of crucial importance in enhancing international cooperation to ease the inherent development handicaps of the landlocked developing countries, as recognized in the Millennium Declaration.

My delegation shares the view that a commitment to human security demands enhanced international cooperation in conflict prevention and strengthened capacities to assist countries in restoring, building and keeping the peace. In this respect, Mongolia fully supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to move the United Nations from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. We believe that mutual understanding and dialogue among different peoples and civilizations are acutely needed to break the pattern of mistrust, suspicion and recrimination that either lead to a conflict or serve as a pretext for it. We know that mutual understanding and dialogue are possible when there is cooperation between nations.

This session of the General Assembly is of special significance to my country and its people, as we celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Mongolia's admission to the United Nations. On 27 October 1961 Mongolia became a full-fledged member of the world Organization, an event of historic importance to my people. Over the years our cooperation with the organizations of the United Nations family has been expanding both in scope and in substance. Today Mongolia is party to some 140 international treaties and conventions, and is a member of 33 inter-governmental and 20 regional and other organizations. The United Nations assistance and cooperation has been instrumental in developing human resources, capacity-building, education, health and information technology, reducing poverty, protecting the environment and developing an adequate response to natural disasters.

Within the framework of the fortieth anniversary, we have been undertaking a host of activities to take stock of our past cooperation with the organizations of the United Nations system and identify priority areas for future cooperation. This culminated in the joint conference organized by the Government of Mongolia and the United Nations on 3 September, in Ulaanbaatar, under the theme "Forty Years of Mongolia-United Nations Cooperation: Implementation of the Millennium Declaration". The main thrust of the discussions and conclusions of that conference has been incorporated into the memorandum of the Government of Mongolia on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, which has been circulated as an official document of this session of the General Assembly.

Over the last four decades of our cooperation, Mongolia has been endeavouring to contribute, where it could, to the common efforts of the international community to promote peace, cooperation and development. My delegation is proud to recall that on the initiative of Mongolia the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Right of Peoples to

Peace, the principles and guidelines for international negotiations, resolutions to observe annually a Disarmament Week and relevant resolutions on the importance of human resources, cooperatives, rural women and the special needs of the landlocked developing countries. Furthermore, as a strong advocate of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world, in 1992 Mongolia declared its own territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and has been working to further institutionalize this.

Recognizing the crucial role of education in ensuring sustainable human development and human security, my delegation is pleased to note that this session of the General Assembly is about to proclaim, on Mongolia's initiative, the 10-year period beginning 1 January 2003 the United Nations decade for literacy.

Mongolia supports peacekeeping operations as one of the important means of maintaining international peace and security. Since the mid-1990s, Mongolia has taken deliberate steps and made measurable progress in developing its peacekeeping capability. Showing its willingness to contribute to the United Nations peacekeeping missions through direct participation, in 1999 Mongolia signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations on standby arrangements regarding the provision of staff officers, military observers and medical officers. Mongolia stands ready to actively cooperate with the United Nations and to make a practical contribution to its peacekeeping operations.

As a member of the Conference on Disarmament, Mongolia cannot but fully agree with the Secretary-General, in paragraph 77 of his report on the work of the Organization (A/56/1), that the "level of international cooperation in disarmament remains disappointingly low." In order to bring the Conference on Disarmament out of its ongoing stalemate it may seem advisable to give political impetus to the disarmament agenda by convening a Security Council meeting at the highest level or holding one of the future sessions of the Conference on Disarmament at the level of Foreign Ministers.

In recent years Mongolia has been an active participant in international activities aimed at strengthening institutions and processes of democratic governance, protecting human rights and promoting democratic consolidation. The 1992 Constitution of Mongolia guarantees the Mongolian people fundamental freedoms and human rights. Mongolia is party to all major international human rights instruments. Earlier this year Mongolia set up an independent National Human Rights Commission. Yesterday Mongolia signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Willing to share its fresh experience of peaceful and simultaneous transition to democracy and a market-oriented economy over the last decade and to learn more from the valuable experiences of other countries, Mongolia has offered to host the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in 2003 in Ulaanbaatar.

The task of ensuring human security and promoting human-centred development is high on the agenda of my Government, as envisaged in its programme of action. Recognizing the importance of the quality of governance in achieving development goals, my Government approved a national programme on good governance for human security to facilitate the policy focus, coherence and sustainability of its programme of action. Mongolia has thus become the first country aspiring to ensure human security through building good governance. As we move along this trailblazing path, we are aware of the need for the knowledge, expertise, experience and assistance of the organizations of the United Nations system and our fellow members of the international community.

The Government is resolved to ensure sustained economic growth through reinvigorating and encouraging the development of domestic industry, rehabilitating the banking sector, upgrading the living standards of the people, reducing poverty and unemployment, and ensuring equitable social and educational opportunities. We will intensify structural reforms and encourage an export-oriented, private-sector-led economy. Mining, processing of raw materials of animal origin, tourism and other export-oriented sectors are the top priority areas of development. Privatization of State assets, including the most valuable State enterprises, will continue. The creation of a favourable environment for the attraction of foreign investment is also a priority objective.

In its endeavours to carry out simultaneous economic and political reforms Mongolia faces many challenges. On behalf of the Government of Mongolia, I wish to express our sincere gratitude and high appreciation to our bilateral and multilateral partners for their generous support and cooperation pledged at

the eighth meeting of the Mongolia Assistance Group, held last May in Paris, demonstrating thus their support of my Government's policy and action.

Mongolia will continue its active participation in multilateral processes and international organizations such as the United Nations and will spare no effort to ensure that the world Organization remains a focal point for coordination of the effort of the community of nations toward peace and development in the years to come.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Mongolia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Enkhbayar, Prime Minister of Mongolia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency the Honourable Jakaya Kikwete, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Kikwete (United Republic of Tanzania): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. Your election is a clear manifestation of the entire membership's confidence in and high regard for your able leadership and diplomatic skills. We wish you success in the tasks ahead. I want to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support.

Our salutations are also extended to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, for a job well done.

Allow me also to sincerely congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the able and distinguished manner in which he has continued to administer and guide the affairs of our Organization. His re-election to a second term attests to the confidence and trust that we have in him. The award of this year's Nobel Peace Prize to him and the United Nations is recognition of his personal attributes and contributions to strengthening the world body. It is also recognition of the glorious performance and achievements of the United Nations in the search of global peace, solidarity and prosperity.

As we applaud and pay tribute to the Secretary-General and the United Nations for their remarkable achievements, the horrific terrorist attacks of 11 September against the United States are a clear reminder to us all that the fight for lasting world peace is far from being won. Strangely enough, the fight can take new dangerous dimensions when aeroplanes, which are a magnificent human invention for the fast movement of people, goods and services between distant places, can themselves become weapons in terror attacks.

Coming from a country that fell victim to a terrorist attack with the bombing of the United States Embassy in Dar es Salaam in 1998, I can clearly understand the pain, anger and quest for revenge on the part of President George Bush, his Administration and the people of the United States of America. On that fateful day, when 11 of our fellow citizen's perished and over 70 people were wounded, the Government and people of my country felt exactly the same. We therefore perceive and share the pain and grief of the people of the United States and support their right and that of their Government to seek redresses and fight the perpetrators of this heinous crime.

Terrorism is a horrendous crime in its brutality and victimization. It is wanton, cruel and indiscriminate. The world must work together to fight and defeat it. Allow me to reiterate Tanzania's pledges, resolve and readiness to continue to participate fully in the efforts to combat terrorism.

The events of 11 September remind us once more of the need to expedite the process establishing the International Criminal Court.

Allow me also to convey sincere sympathy to the families of the deceased in yesterday's tragic plane crash. Our thoughts and prayers are with them in this time of grief.

This is the first session of the General Assembly after the Millennium Summit held here last year. At that Summit, the world leaders defined the agenda and strategies of our Organization in the new century. There was common understanding in the new century, a resolve to continue to work together to tackle the numerous problems bequeathed by the last century. It is the view of my delegation that this session of the General Assembly and the subsequent ones should translate that commitment into concrete actions.

Permit me at this juncture to share with the Assembly some thoughts about what could be the important priorities of the United Nations. Tanzania

would like to see a United Nations that continues to be the guarantor of world peace and security, a United Nations that has the development agenda at the centre of its main objectives and activities and a United Nations that continues to fight for justice and equality among peoples and nations the world over.

Strengthening and revitalizing the United Nations is an imperative we all agreed to undertake almost a decade ago. We have done a remarkable job as regards the restructuring of the Secretariat and the United Nations agencies. It is regrettable that reform and restructuring of the Security Council remain elusive. A process started seven years ago has yet to bear the desired result. The disturbing thing is the fact that in some quarters it no longer appears to be a priority subject.

Tanzania believes that expansion of Security Council membership in both categories is as relevant and desirable today as it was seven years ago. We would like to reaffirm our support for the principle of equitable representation of Member States on the basis of their geographical regions. In particular, we want to reiterate support for Africa's request for two seats in the permanent category. As the continent with the largest portion of the membership of our Organization, such a representation is well deserved. We also think that the time has come to have a serious look at the circumstances and modalities for invoking the use of veto powers. We are of the view that the veto power should be used in pursuit of global interests, and not narrow national interests.

At the Millennium Summit, world leaders emphasized that the development agenda should continue to be at the centre of the objectives and activities of the United Nations. We know that the United Nations is not a major funding institution, but over the years it has been the moral force behind the many difficult decisions taken to address serious economic issues. The United Nations organized several forums where various development agenda items were discussed and continue to be discussed, and decisions taken. We want the United Nations to continue to do that.

In a period of global economic slow-down like the one we are witnessing today, the task of forging new strategies to tackle the intractable problems of poverty, hunger, disease, deprivation and environmental degradation becomes very challenging indeed. We hope the current economic crisis will not last long, because if it does its consequences may be bad for us all, especially the developing countries. I would also add that Africa, as a continent with 34 of the 48 least developed countries, will suffer the most.

In view of this situation, this world body, donor countries and least developed countries must muster collective efforts to ensure that these problems and many more are addressed collectively. I know that there can never be quick fixes to resolving such problems. However, building those kinds of partnerships is one thing that the United Nations should help realize.

There is no doubt that for development to make sense in the context of the developing countries like Tanzania, the availability of official development assistance (ODA), plus long-term capital flows and access to technology and markets of the developed countries, are essential. These will have a catalytic role in building domestic supply capacity.

We are particularly concerned that the situation with regard to availability of ODA is still not encouraging. Most developed countries are far from meeting the target of contributing 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product to ODA, as agreed way back in 1970 and reiterated at the 1992 Rio Summit. What is more disturbing to us is the fact that the decline continues unabated despite numerous appeals. My delegation would once again like to use this opportunity to call upon the developed countries to honour this historic duty to mankind. We hope the United Nations will remain seized of the matter and exercise leadership.

The flow of foreign direct investment (FDI), which is so essential for inducing growth in our nations, leaves much to be desired. So far, the flow of FDI is not as we would have wanted or have expected it to be.

The painful part of this problem is the fact that many of our countries have done everything that has been demanded of us in order to create a conducive environment for FDI to flow, yet there is not much of it coming. Take the example of my country, where we have established, through an Act of Parliament, a financial, legal and institutional framework as attractive and competitive as one would find anywhere in the world. We have a sound macroeconomic environment; there is political stability; and good

governance and democracy are vibrant, yet foreign direct investment flows are minimal.

My country's experience is the experience of many countries in the developing world. We are at a loss as to what else we have to do. Maybe someone will volunteer to tell us. While we continue to appeal to the developed countries to do more, we request the indulgence of the United Nations. In this regard, we welcome and support the convening of the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held next March. We hope that the question of ODA and FDI will be given appropriate consideration. I promise Tanzania's full participation in that Conference.

Easy access by the developing countries to the technology and markets of the developed world could contribute immensely towards the alleviation and eventual eradication of poverty in the world. There are encouraging developments in the area of market access, with initiatives such as the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which allows over 1,800 products from countries of sub-Saharan Africa to enter the United States market duty-free and quota-free, and the Cotonou Agreement, which allows everything but arms from the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific to enter the European Union duty-free and quota-free.

We hope the initiatives taken by Japan under the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and by the People's Republic of China under the China-Africa Cooperation Forum will go a little further and offer opportunities similar to those offered under AGOA and the Cotonou Agreement. It is our sincere hope and expectation that the four aforementioned initiatives by the United States, the European Union, China and Japan will also ease the difficulties experienced by our countries in accessing the financial, scientific and technological resources available in those nations. While our nations will continue to engage the developed countries bilaterally or collectively in various forums, the United Nations should never lose sight of the need to help us.

The problem of the external debt of developing countries, and particularly of the least developed countries, continues to pose a serious challenge to the development efforts of those countries. External debt servicing has been crowding out priority social investments in our respective countries. In Tanzania, for example, debt servicing averaged one-third of the entire Government's budget. With another one-third spent on payment of salaries, the Government is left with only a third of the budget to perform its duties, which range from maintaining law and order to the provision of basic social and economic services. This clearly underscores the fact that debt relief and debt forgiveness for nations like mine will go a long way towards enhancing Government capacity to discharge its duties.

In this regard, Tanzania welcomes the various measures undertaken by the international community aimed at dealing with this chronic debt problem. Our only concern is that, despite all these measures, the scope and magnitude of debt is continuing to build up to dangerous proportions. More surgical measures should therefore be taken to deal more effectively with this crippling problem.

Let me now turn to issues related to peace and security. At the outset, let me state that it is heartwarming to see the Security Council more engaged in the process of trying to tackle the crisis in the Great Lakes region. The Government of Tanzania is committed to building a secure and stable Great Lakes region. In this regard, I want to assure the United Nations that we will continue to play a positive role, as we have been doing, in order to help the people of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo secure and enjoy the peace which they so richly deserve.

It is encouraging to note that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite difficulties, the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement is on track. We are particularly glad that the inter-Congolese dialogue is under way. I would like to use this opportunity to appeal to the parties to the conflict to stay the course. We also appeal to the Security Council to remain seized of the matter, and to the international community to extend the urgently needed financial resources to the facilitation of the dialogue.

We welcome the installation of the Transitional Government in Burundi. We hope that this historic event, which marks the successful conclusion of long and arduous political negotiations, is also the beginning of an irreversible process that will put an end to the long years of pain and suffering endured by the people of Burundi. Indeed, the subregion continues to work towards the cessation of hostilities and towards

ultimately securing a ceasefire agreement between the rebels and the Government. In this respect, I would like to take this opportunity to say three things.

First, let me reiterate Tanzania's previous calls for the leaders of the Front for the Defence of Democracy (FDD) and the National Liberation Forces (FNL) to see reason and to join the Arusha process. I believe that there is nothing they are fighting for which has not been discussed and decided upon in the Arusha Agreement. Even if they feel strongly that something has been excluded, the Arusha Agreement provides opportunities for discussion of the same by the parties.

Secondly, Tanzania promises its readiness to work with the new Government and to do all it can to help it succeed. We are ready to work with the new Administration in Bujumbura and with the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) to engage the rebels and encourage them to join the Arusha Agreement.

The third issue I would like to address relates to the repatriation of Burundi refugees living in Tanzania. It need not be emphasized that the return of refugees to their homeland is a crucial element in the healing and normalization process in that troubled country. As host to over 800,000 refugees from Burundi, Tanzania expects repatriation of these refugees to be among the top priority issues in the implementation of the Arusha Agreement. It is our sincere hope that, in that exercise, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will include not only the half a million people in the camps that they manage in Kigoma and Ngara, but also the earlier caseloads of about 300,000 they left to Tanzania to manage.

It is sad that Savimbi and his renegade UNITA continue to be a menace in Angola. The United Nations and the international community should do more to stop this menace. If action could be taken in Kosovo and Sierra Leone against criminal leaders, why not do the same against Savimbi and UNITA? I believe it can be done. Let us muster the political courage.

With regard to Western Sahara, Tanzania reiterates its long-held position that this is a question of decolonization and that the Sahrawi people have a right to decide on their future through a referendum, as stipulated in the relevant Security Council resolutions. We fear that abandoning that path could lead to untoward events.

It is regrettable that the situation in the Middle East remains volatile and explosive. It is our hope that the peace negotiations between Palestine and Israel will be revived through a resolute commitment by all parties. The United Nations has a major role in ensuring that the peace process gets back on track. The commitment made by President Bush on the creation of the state of Palestine on the basis of Security Council resolutions is very reassuring. We hope this will be followed through and that the United States Government will once again assume its leadership role.

As host country to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, we cannot but reiterate our call for continued support for the Tribunal. It is gratifying that the Tribunal's mission of bringing to justice those responsible for the genocide in Rwanda is well under way. Contrary to previous negative publicity, the Tribunal is increasingly obtaining the appreciation and credit it deserves for its work.

I would be remiss if I were to conclude my remarks without saying a word about the debilitating disease of HIV/AIDS. The impact of this worldwide scourge is not only a major scientific and medical challenge, but a threat to the very existence of humanity. Our leaders at the June special session dedicated to HIV/AIDS pronounced themselves on this scourge and on their resolve to fight it. Let me express our appreciation for the leadership role of the United Nations, particularly the Secretary-General's commitment to combat this global crisis, from which no corner of this world is safe.

I believe that, with resolute political will, the war against this world pandemic is not insurmountable.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, His Excellency Mr. Jozias van Aartsen.

Mr. Van Aartsen (Netherlands): How can anyone stand on the smoking ashes of "ground zero" and not be overwhelmed by disbelief, anger, and frustration? How can anyone escape the enormity of what happened in September or not feel compassion for all those who have lost someone dear to them? At "ground zero" we not only witness death and destruction, but we also see how American values have come under siege. These are shared values. That is why the people I represent now stand squarely behind the United States.

No matter how deeply moved we may be, we must look beyond our anger and frustration. Through our tears, we should discover opportunity. Through our bitterness, necessity. We must turn compassion into solidarity, turn solidarity into common action. We need a plan — in sum, we must turn to the United Nations.

The reaction on the part of the United Nations from the beginning of this crisis has been prompt and responsible. As we meet this week, we must try and keep the momentum going. And that is precisely what we are doing. There is something I have sensed in the first few days of this general debate — namely, determination — determination to use the United Nations to the fullest, on many different fronts, as a centre of gravity for our common actions — common action for confronting a global threat — common action to maintain the international order.

With regard to that common action, what have we learned so far? Three lessons. Lesson number one: the law must be firmly in place. There is a wealth of legal rules to guide us in these difficult times, and more of them are on the way. A striking example of innovative rule-making was presented by the Security Council. Binding under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, resolution 1373 (2001) takes action not in regard to a specific threat or breach of the peace, not against a particular Member State, but takes action to confront a phenomenon, a threat to our human values and economic interests — action against unidentified enemies. By writing new law, the Council has broken new ground. Even more so, as it has set up the Counter-Terrorism Committee to monitor the implementation of its decision.

Jointly with our partners in the European Union, we are taking the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) very seriously. One aspect of it is especially important to us: promoting ratification of all of the various anti-terrorism conventions and monitoring compliance. My country has some expertise to offer and will gladly share it. Meanwhile, an overarching convention against terrorism is in the works. That is good. But we are getting bogged down over a definition of terrorism. That is bad. Let us not forget that it took us 20 years to produce a fairly useless definition of aggression. The world cannot wait that long. Besides, when terrorism stares you in the face, you'll know it.

In addition to rule-making, the real challenge lies in implementation. There, we should try harder. Let me give you one example. Just before the summer we lost our momentum in the fight against biological warfare, and therefore the fight against bio-terrorism as well. The world is a scary place. Anthrax is only one motive for retrieving that momentum. Let us resume our efforts to turn the Biological Weapons Convention into an instrument that can really make a difference.

The need for stepping up security is immediate, comprehensive and self-evident. In the aftermath of 11 September, nobody would deny it. But we need to be concerned with the downside of security as well. Parts of our value system may come under pressure when Governments seek to bolster public safety, and by this I mean human rights and fundamental freedoms. As private citizens we must be ready to make concessions and, yes, we will be forced to relinquish some freedom from intrusion in our private lives. But we cannot be expected to live in a never-ending state of siege. Wherever we have to strike a balance, we have to do so wisely. Long ago, we drew a line beyond which we cannot step — we cannot detract from the basic principles of human rights. Those principles are the true measure of our evolution and our civilization. If we look the other way, we lose the moral high ground. If we compromise, we lose out to those who besiege us.

What is being put to the test here is our own value system. The core notion of that system is tolerance. Tolerance must, however, come from all sides. Tolerance is not the equivalent of giving in to intolerance. It does not imply that you bend at the slightest pressure. Tolerance means that you stand up to be counted, that you draw a line in the sand when your basic values are challenged. That is lesson number one.

Lesson number two: there are "black holes" in the international order: failing States. We knew they were there all along, but we have never been quite sure how to deal with them. Why should we care about failing States? For several reasons. Look at the avalanche of drugs, drug-money, weapons, and warlords spilling out of Afghanistan. Look at the blood diamonds streaming out of Africa. Think of how failing States attract parasites and how they turn into breeding grounds for terrorism, a haven for international crime. Think of peace and security, too; of how faltering countries become a liability to their own people; of how they flaunt the rules of the game and become a liability to the whole neighbourhood.

How do we deal with failing States? That question has never been answered in a systematic manner. Any answer begins by recognition on the part of the Member States of this Organization that failing States are a problem. Indeed, it may turn out to be the most pernicious problem of the new century. From that point on, we need to build a strategy, and do so together, within the framework of this Organization.

What are we aiming at? How ambitious are we? Can we get in early to prevent failing States from failing? Are there any early warning signals to look out for? If we see those signals, do we have the means to act? And the political will? Once States are failing, do we try and fix them? Do we settle for ending the fighting, wherever fighting is going on? Or do we limit ourselves to humanitarian aid? These are all difficult questions.

My belief is that outside intervention only goes so far. I do not believe that massive injections of aid are the right answer to failing States. For one thing, donors are reluctant to poor money down a black hole. But more importantly: the solution should not come from the outside, but rather from the inside. Even in the poorest country we will find well-educated citizens just as committed to building better lives for their children as in the rest of the world. They need a helping hand in building good governance and a viable civil society. Yet, ownership is paramount. Failing States, too, have the capacity to fix themselves. Indeed, only if they fix themselves will they no longer fail. Our role should be to help galvanize and to enable those capacities.

Lesson number three: the United Nations should be doing the right things. As of today the Northern Alliance has entered the city of Kabul. That fact makes it even more imperative that we speak about Afghanistan in the United Nations.

Consensus is growing that in post-Taliban Afghanistan, the United Nations should play a central role. I certainly support that view. But a central role in what? For make no mistake: once the bombing stops, the difficulties are still overwhelming. The country is not only rugged and ruined, but also the size of Central Europe and packed with landmines. Factional fighting is bound to continue. The United Nations can do a lot, but we need to beware of sending the United Nations on an impossible mission. Instead of calling on the United Nations for functions where it is weak, let us call on the United Nations for functions where it is strong.

For example, take governance, a major worry to us all. Much as we seek to avoid it, a political vacuum is a realistic prospect, given that tribal conflict in Afghanistan is as old as the country's history. Afghans are a proud people. Hostility towards outside intervention is strong. The country needs to be governed from within. We may be looking both for a broad-based interim Government and for a stable permanent structure. Without rushing to elections, we need to be satisfied that such a political settlement is supported by the population. In the process, the United Nations might play a central role as a catalyst and as an adviser, but not as a governor. Afghanistan is not East Timor. It is important, too, that any settlement be supported by the neighbouring States and by a Security Council resolution.

As regards security: in the absence of a functional national army, transitional military arrangements are essential. They are essential to create a secure environment enabling reconstruction to begin and refugees to return home. Choosing the right format is critical. A conventional United Nations peacekeeping operation may not be a good idea — certainly not for the country as a whole. Supplying peacekeepers is still voluntary. Realistically, the troop levels needed for a country this size would almost certainly not be attained. Bosnia has taught us the hard lesson of the price we pay when we send in a United Nations force that is below par. We should be careful to avoid another Somalia. Different formats for security arrangements are possible, and we should reflect on them as a whole. In a previous context, Ambassador Brahimi has offered us a wide spectrum of lessons learned about United Nations peacekeeping. We should take them to heart. Now, as the Special Representative, he deserves all the support he needs from us.

Concerning mine clearance: Afghanistan has more landmines than any other country in the world. The country cannot possibly get back on its feet as long as those mines are there. We have to get rid of them, and the United Nations can help us to do that. We must pay the bills.

As to reconstruction: we should capitalize on where the United Nations is uniquely positioned either to deploy operations in the field or to coordinate those of others. Let us not limit our view to the part of the

United Nations here in New York, but rather broaden it to the entire United Nations system, including the Dumbarton Oaks and Bretton Woods institutions. We need to bring the full weight of that system to bear on the future of Afghanistan. I am speaking of the World Health Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Drug Control Programme, of the International Labour Organization and the World Food Programme, of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. There is no need to set up a whole new mechanism. The Afghanistan Support Group is fully entrenched, and we should use it.

Especially now, caught in the crossfire, the Afghan people are not to be envied. Their plight will not be over once the guns are silent. Food stocks, health care, housing, utilities, schooling, agriculture — the list of concerns is a long one. But all of us need to push that agenda. We may not be part of the problem of Afghanistan, but we must be part of the solution.

Yet again, reconstruction cannot be imposed upon a nation. Here, too, a sustainable recovery needs to come from within. All the men, and especially the women of Afghanistan, must once again become the makers of their own fate and future. The answer lies with them.

The United Nations is not merely "an ineffective acronym", as a misguided message on the Internet would have you believe. For global issues, multilateral cooperation is the only answer. Multilateralism is solidarity worked into a plan. As I said, the reaction by the United Nations system in the aftermath of 11 September has been prompt and responsible. In order to maintain that level of performance, we, the Member States, will have to show the stamina, support and commitment to make it happen. Our track record is not impeccable. The United Nations can go no faster than we will let it, which means we have to make it work. This also means we have to provide it with all the resources, and the political will, to give it the push and punch we need.

The President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Guinea, Her Excellency Ms. Mahawa Bangoura Camara.

Ms. Camara (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I should like to associate my country and delegation with the expressions of sympathy for the great suffering endured by the city of New York following the crash of the American Airlines plane yesterday. To the Government of the United States, our host city and all the bereaved families, I address the condolences of the Government and people of Guinea.

A year ago in this Hall, the great leaders of the world, in a unanimous surge, committed themselves to thinking together about the role of this Organization, the United Nations, in the twenty-first century, and about ways of achieving its objectives fully, with a view to constructing together a world of peace, progress and solidarity. The historic Declaration which emerged from the Millennium Summit emphasized the need to open a new era of international relations.

It was when the international community was preparing to review the implementation of the recommendations and decisions of that Summit that unprecedented terrorist acts cast a shadow over our hopes. These acts, to which the United States fell victim on 11 September 2001, profoundly shocked the conscience of all peoples. The barbarity and violence of these terrorist attacks, and also the threat of bioterrorism, are serious attacks on international peace and security.

My delegation would like once again to express its sympathy to the American people, especially the families of the many victims. The Republic of Guinea condemns those intolerable acts and believes that it should be the concern of all States to combat and eradicate terrorism. We firmly support any measures aimed at eliminating the bases of international terrorism and fully associate ourselves with the international community in its global response to that scourge.

The fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly is thus taking place within the context of a new and alarming situation for international peace and security. My delegation is therefore very pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the Assembly during this session. We are convinced that your wealth of experience, as well as your great diplomatic skill, will ensure the success of our discussions. I would like to assure you of the cooperation and support of the delegation of Guinea.

I should also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for the excellent work accomplished under his presidency.

My delegation would like once again to convey the warm congratulations of General Lansana Conté, President of the Republic of Guinea, to our brother, Kofi Annan, on his well-deserved re-election as the head of our Organization. The unanimous tribute that has been paid to him brings honour to the whole of the African continent and bears witness to his great qualities and his commitment to achieving the objectives of the United Nations. The Nobel Peace Prize recently awarded jointly to him and to the Organization is eloquent testimony to that commitment and an encouragement to continue to act in the service of peace and understanding among peoples.

The award of the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations is, without doubt, a recognition of its role in the implementation of its objectives — the maintenance of international peace and security, development and cooperation among nations. Increasingly, the Organization is proving to be the necessary crucible for dialogue among States. However, almost all Members earnestly desire the strengthening and improvement of the entire system.

While reaffirming its support for the reform process initiated by the Secretary-General, my country, the Republic of Guinea, would like to emphasize the need to strengthen the principal organs of the Organization. We welcome the actions taken by your predecessor, Sir, to streamline the working methods of the General Assembly so as to give it fresh dynamism. We hope that that impetus will continue.

My delegation would also like to reaffirm its support for restructuring the Security Council, in its membership as well as its working methods, so as to enable it to better protect the interests of all Member States. I should like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of my Government, our gratitude to all States for the unanimous support that enabled Guinea to be elected a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2002 and 2003. During its mandate, the Republic of Guinea will make every effort to contribute actively to the maintenance of peace and security in the world.

Peace and security continue to be threatened in many parts of the world. In the Middle East, intolerance and intransigence have led to a dangerous escalation of violence, which, if not controlled in time, could cause the whole region to go up in flames. The Republic of Guinea would like to appeal to all the parties to exercise greater restraint so as to facilitate a resumption of the peace process. My country supports the full application of the recommendations of the Mitchell commission and the implementation of effective follow-up mechanisms. Dispatching international observers could contribute to ending the violence and returning peace to all the peoples there. However, the indifference of the international community and its failure to take action could, in the long term, prove to be prejudicial to security in the Middle East.

My delegation condemns all acts of violence, which can lead only to a worsening of the situation. In the light of the serious events that have taken place in recent months, the international community must do all that it can to lead all parties to accept a ceasefire and to resume the peace process. Arms must give way to dialogue, which should lead to a just, equitable and lasting peace. The legitimate rights of the Palestinian people should be respected. Likewise, the existence and security of Israel must be guaranteed.

One year ago, my country became the victim of aggression committed by rebel groups. That barbaric aggression caused great loss of life and material damage. My Government would like to express its full appreciation for the subsequent role played by the United Nations in adopting appropriate measures to create conditions conducive to the restoration of peace and stability in the subregion. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the individuals and States that contributed to the adoption and implementation of those measures. One year later, the fact that a dialogue has been initiated by civil society in the three countries concerned — Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea — means that we have reached an important stage in the search for peace.

The Republic of Guinea, which has always shown its determination to maintain and strengthen friendship, brotherhood and cooperation with all African countries in general and neighbouring countries in particular, would like to reaffirm to the Assembly its readiness to make the Mano River Union a model of economic integration, social cohesion and political stability.

However, relaunching the activities of the Union will depend upon respect for the relevant provisions of the Non-aggression and Security Cooperation Treaty signed by the three countries and of the 15th Protocol to the Mano River Declaration, signed at Conakry on 8

May 2000. That is what is required for productive dialogue among the three countries.

In the framework of the process of re-establishing confidence and dialogue among the countries members of the Mano River Union, meetings have been held at the ministerial level in Monrovia, Freetown and Conakry. Those meetings made it possible to discuss important problems relating to the activities of armed groups in the subregion, the situation of refugees, measures to rebuild confidence, peace and security, and the need to reactivate the various bodies of the Mano River Union.

My Government welcomes the encouraging developments in Sierra Leone, particularly the programme for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). The DDR programme that has been implemented will have to be consolidated if it is to lead to the true demobilization of all the Revolutionary United Front combatants and if the mistakes made in Liberia are to be avoided. In Liberia, the restoration of peace after 10 years of civil war has not, unfortunately, been accompanied by a true DDR programme or by post-conflict financial support.

I would like to express regret with regard to the inadequate results of the Paris conference convened to deal with the problem of Sierra Leone, and to call on the international community to provide the necessary material and financial support to guarantee lasting peace in that country. My delegation bases its appeal on the relevant recommendations contained in the Brahimi report, which have been accepted by the principal organs of the Organization. The Republic of Guinea will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States in restoring peace, security and national reconciliation in Sierra Leone.

The question of refugees is still a matter of great concern for my Government. The enormous economic, social, environmental and security impact of the continued presence of hundreds of thousands of Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees continues to impose a heavy burden on the economic and social life of my country. The situation of the refugees is a matter of great concern for the international community at a time when rebel attacks against my country are being carried out, as the countries hosting refugees are the main target of the aggressors. Following this aggression, the Government took appropriate measures, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to relocate refugees in zones far from the borders in order to ensure their security.

The Secretary-General's report on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance amply describes the context of humanitarian assistance and the difficulties to be overcome, particularly in complex emergency situations.

We welcome the missions undertaken in the subregion of West Africa by various United Nations bodies, as well as the conclusions they reached. While the resolution of most issues identified by those missions requires an integrated approach, it is nonetheless true that problems peculiar to certain countries require particular attention. With respect to Guinea, a victim of the consequences of the conflicts in the subregion, it would be desirable for the international community to provide greater support. In that regard, I wish to reiterate the appeal to convene a conference on solidarity with Guinea in order to help it address the consequences of the prolonged presence of refugees on its territory. I would stress that this appeal of the Guinean Government is supported by the United Nations inter-agency mission that recently visited our country.

Before I conclude on this topic, I wish to welcome the proposal to create a United Nations office for West Africa, in accordance with the recommendation of the Fall mission report. The creation of such a body would demonstrate the Organization's clear interest in making the West African region a zone of peace, security and cooperation. My country will spare no effort in cooperating fully with that office.

How can we discuss the conflicts in Africa without highlighting the links between the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the traffic in weapons and the perpetuation of conflict? The reports of the various groups of experts established by the Security Council are edifying on this subject. In Sierra Leone, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, these links have clearly shown the involvement, in addition to rebel groups, of certain authorities in that illegal activity.

My Government therefore fully supports the actions of the Security Council to impose sanctions against any Government or group involved in the

pillaging of a country's natural resources, in accordance with the relevant provisions of international law. The Republic of Guinea feels that if energetic deterrent measures are not taken against the perpetrators of such crimes, which are emerging as a new kind of threat to peace, the entire African continent may once again fall victim to conflict.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my country calls for scrupulous respect for the Lusaka Agreement and for all pertinent Security Council resolutions, and in particular for the withdrawal of foreign troops, safeguarding the integrity of Congolese territory and the pursuit of the inter-Congolese dialogue.

In the Western Sahara, my country welcomes the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General. We are following with great interest the new initiatives under way to find an acceptable solution to the crisis.

The phenomenon of globalization, characteristic of international life today, calls for greater attention from our States. My delegation is aware of the necessary interdependence of nations and wishes once again to stress that there can be no shared destiny without a minimum of justice and solidarity in international relations. We must work together to make international economic relations more human and to eradicate poverty.

There is no need here to point out that poverty, destitution and illiteracy, which are unfortunately the lot of a large majority of nations, provide fertile ground for the propagation of the extremism and fanaticism that, regrettably, underlie terrorist tendencies throughout the world. The eradication of poverty should be the objective of all countries in strengthening the bases of lasting peace and security in the world.

Allow me to reiterate the appeal to the rich countries to listen more closely to the poorer nations and to support them in their development efforts. In this respect, I renew the appeal for the adoption of a better approach to the question of the debt of African countries, for appropriate payment for raw materials and for an increase in official development assistance.

On another level, the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO) sought to institute an equitable multilateral trade system with special reference to the particular situation of the least developed countries. It is regrettable to note today, however, that the least developed countries are being increasingly marginalized in the globalization process and that their share of the world trade market is only 0.4 per cent.

The Republic of Guinea hopes that this trend will be reversed and that decisions to that end will be taken at the fourth WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha. These decisions will have to address, inter alia, the issue of the implementation of WTO accords, the consolidation of special and differentiated treatment set forth in the various WTO agreements, consolidated market access for the products of the least developed countries to the markets of the developed countries, and access to essential drugs for the poorest populations of the world that are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. I also welcome the People's Republic of China's accession to full membership of the WTO and reiterate the support of the Guinean Government for the position positing a single China.

In addition, we would like to see the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in March in Mexico, become an opportunity for all parties to agree on solutions promoting sustainable development for all members of the international community, in particular the developing countries and especially those on the African continent.

In stressing the interdependence of environmental, economic and social factors, my delegation feels that the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in South Africa, should encourage the financing of projects. My delegation urges greater involvement by the international financial institutions in the search for ways to promote international cooperation for development. In the framework of operational activities for development, the funds and programmes of the United Nations must more than ever harmonize and stress their interaction on the African continent so as to allow it to rise above conflict and underdevelopment.

I also take this opportunity to appeal to the international community to give special attention to the New African Initiative, adopted at the recent Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in Lusaka in July, in order to help Africa to participate actively in the world economy and international political life and thus to

escape exclusion from a planet undergoing full-scale globalization.

The United Nations was born last century. It continues to exist in this new century. This is a source of satisfaction to humanity. It is therefore essential that we return to the ideals on which the Organization was founded and that we give it the means to achieve a world of peace, progress, solidarity and concord. The achievement of such a world is possible if we want it. Let us work together to make the noble ideals contained in the Millennium Declaration a reality so that we may lay the foundations of a planetary village free of threats to the survival of mankind, such as the scourge of war, poverty, injustice and intolerance. I can solemnly assure the Assembly that my country will cooperate to achieve that end.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

Mr. Pérez Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Before delivering my statement, I would like to express our condolences to the United States, the Dominican Republic and other countries represented here that have lost citizens among the many passengers and crew members who perished in yesterday's tragic crash of American Airlines flight 587, and I hereby extend these condolences to their families.

The war in Afghanistan must be stopped. The Government of the United States must acknowledge that it has made a mistake, and must halt its ineffective, unjustifiable bombing campaign against the Afghan people.

Judging by its results, it would seem that this war has targeted children, the civilian population and the hospitals and facilities of the International Committee of the Red Cross. As to its methods, no honest voice would be raised in this Hall to defend the endless slaughter, with the most sophisticated weaponry, of a dispossessed, starving, helpless people. As to its doubtful purposes, this war will never be justified from the point of view of ethics and international law. Those responsible for it will one day be judged by history.

Cuba has opposed this war from the very beginning as an absurd, inefficient method to eradicate terrorism, and reiterates that it can only bring more hatred and ever-increasing dangers of new actions of this kind. No one has the right to continue murdering children, aggravating the humanitarian crisis and visiting impoverishment and death on millions of refugees.

If the United States obtained a military victory by eliminating all regular and irregular Afghan resistance — something that is not at all easy in practice and extremely costly on a moral level, for it would represent a real genocide without attaining the objective that we must pursue — the world would be farther away than ever from achieving peace, security and the eradication of terrorism.

Cuba's discourse is not founded on ill feelings against the country that has been our most pitiless adversary for over 40 years. It is inspired by a sincere, constructive spirit and a sense of respect for and sympathy towards the people of the United States, which suffered an unjustifiable and atrocious terrorist attack. It is also based on the aspiration for peace and justice for all the peoples of the world.

What Cuba expresses in this Hall, with full openness, may not be to the liking of those who run the United States today, but it will be understood one day by the American people, whose generosity and sense of justice were proved to the Cuban people when it had the support of 80 percent of the public opinion in this country in our struggle to prevent a kidnapped Cuban child from being torn away from his family and subjected to ludicrous political manipulations and cruel psychological tortures.

What Cuba is saying from this rostrum, as we well know, is what many people have been saying in the corridors of this building. What international coalition are we talking about? What is its legitimacy based on if it has started by scandalously disregarding the General Assembly? The United States has not fostered international cooperation. It has rather imposed its war on a unilateral basis and has stated in an unprecedented way that whoever does not second them is for terrorism. How long will the precarious support obtained last, since it is not based on harmonized objectives and voluntary agreement, but on the imposition of will through threats and pressures?

You can be the strongest, but not necessarily right. You can inspire dread, but not sympathy and respect. Only from genuine international cooperation — in which all countries, big and small, participate with a full understanding of everyone's positions, with broadmindedness and tolerance in the

methods used, within the framework of the United Nations and the strict respect for the principles enshrined in its Charter — can a truly effective and lasting alliance emerge to fight terrorism.

The world was surprised to learn of the official announcement of the United States to the Security Council that it reserved the right to decide on an attack against other countries in the future. What is left of the Charter after this? Can this unprecedented threat by any chance be interpreted as an exercise of the right to legitimate defence, enshrined in the Charter as the right of a State to deal with acts of aggression until the Council adopts the necessary measures, and not as a vulgar excuse to unleash attacks against other countries? Is this announcement, or is it not, the proclamation of the right of a super-Power to trample upon the still fragile and incomplete standards that protect the sovereignty, security and rights of peoples?

Cuba calmly and firmly rejects that language. We have not done so out of concern for our own security, because there is no power in the world that can subdue our spirit of independence, freedom and social justice and the courage to defend it at any cost. We did so, because we believe that it is still possible to halt the escalation of a useless, brutal war that threatens to further plunge into hopelessness, insecurity and death the poor peoples of the planet, who are by no means responsible for any act of terrorism, but will be — and already are — the main victims of this senselessness.

Only under the leadership of the United Nations will we be able to defeat terrorism. Cooperation, and not war, is the way. The coordination of actions, and not the imposition of will, is the method. Our objective must be to obliterate terrorism by removing its root causes — and not the hegemonic assertion of the strength of a super-Power, thus turning us into accomplices to its arrogance and arbitrariness.

Therefore, Cuba — which has already responded to the Secretary-General's appeal by deciding to immediately ratify all of the international legal instruments on terrorism — resolutely supports the adoption of a general convention on international terrorism. Of course, this will be possible only in the context of the General Assembly, which — though now completely ignored by those who are promoting the new campaign — has, over the past 10 years, despite the silence and apathy of the Security Council, adopted the principal resolutions and declarations calling for an outright combat against terrorism.

This will allow us finally to define terrorism with accuracy. We have to prevent attempts from being made by a handful of actors with vested interests to try to label as such the right of nations to fight for their self-determination or against foreign aggression. It must be clearly established that the support, abetting, financing or concealment of terrorist actions by a State is also an act of terrorism.

Cuba, which is working on its own anti-terrorism law, which should be in effect shortly, unreservedly endorses the proposal to convene an international conference on terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations. This has been a longtime aspiration of the Non-Aligned Movement and should enable us, as a result of open discussions, collective action and respectful and non-discriminatory agreement — and not of threats, terror or force — to find a way to fully eliminate terrorism and its causes. Here I am speaking of terrorism committed not only against the United States but against any other country — even if emanating from the territory of the United States, or tolerated by, or with the complicity of, its authorities, as has been Cuba's painful experience for over four decades.

Only four days ago, the Pakistani media attributed to a character who is well known and very familiar to the United States a statement supposedly made from Afghan territory saying that he has chemical and nuclear weapons and is threatening to use them against the United States if it uses similar weapons against Afghanistan.

Everybody knows that Afghanistan does not have the slightest ability to produce or launch nuclear or chemical weapons. Only a terrorist organization or leader could come up with the idea of executing an action of this kind using nuclear or chemical weapons. Of course, theoretically this could be possible, as a consequence of the irresponsible behaviour of the major nuclear Powers and as a result of the arms trade, corruption and illegal trafficking in all sorts of military technology. Indeed, several of those Powers have acted as accomplices to, and taken part in, the traffic in fissile material and the transfer of nuclear technology, as suits their interests. However, in reality, given the conditions of war in Afghanistan, it would be ridiculous to resort to those threats. To do so would be

to show tremendous political and military ignorance. If one lacked such means, this would be a dangerous bluff, and if one did have them, it would be absolute madness to threaten to use them.

If the threats contained in the statement published by two Pakistani newspapers are true, they deserve the strongest condemnation, as would the eventual use of such weapons against Afghanistan. That would be a stupid reaction, since, under those circumstances, the only thing that poor, suffering country would have to gain would be a universal condemnation of the use of such weapons. Such threats serve only the interests of the extremist and belligerent forces within the United States, which favour the use of the most sophisticated weapons of mass destruction against the Afghan people. The best weapon for a country that is the victim of aggression is to earn and keep the sympathy of the world, and not to allow anyone to violate the ethical principle that no one has the right to kill children, not even if others are doing it. There is no justice in killing innocent people to avenge the death of other innocents.

Cuba has stated without hesitation that it is opposed to terrorism and to war. Cuba, which is not under obligation to anyone, will continue to be consistent in its positions. Truth and ethical considerations should prevail above all else.

The way events have unfolded, the increased level of hatred and the intensification of passions and potential dangers have shown the absolute truth of the assertion that war has never been, is not, and never will be the way to eradicate terrorism.

The most critical socio-economic crisis ever — the result, halfway through the last decade, of the resounding and irreversible failure of neo-liberalism and neo-liberal globalization — has been dramatically aggravated by this war, which was imposed by one side but whose consequences we all have to bear.

This war must be stopped, not only because its consequences for the Afghan civilian population, but also because of the danger of destabilization in that region. It must be stopped in order not only to save thousands of Americans — mostly young — and thousands of Afghans and other nationals from a senseless death, and not only to preserve international peace and stability, but because this conflict makes it impossible to achieve the objective set by the United Nations 15 years ago: the right to development for all, and an equal opportunity to attain it, and because it renders obsolete the decision made only a year ago to work together in order to eliminate poverty from the face of the Earth.

Will we be willing to organize a coalition against poverty, famine, ignorance, diseases and the scourge of AIDS that is currently decimating the African continent; a coalition for sustainable development, for the preservation of the environment and against the destruction of the planet?

A coalition has been assembled to avenge the grievous and unjustifiable death of over 4,000 innocent people in the United States. Let us come together to seek justice for this great crime — and let us do so without war; let us come together to save from death the hundreds of thousands of poor women who die during childbirth every year; let us come together to save from death the 12 million children who die of preventable diseases before the age of 5 every year in the third world; let us come together to bring medicine for AIDS to the 25 million Africans who today are hopelessly awaiting death; let us come together to invest in development at least a portion of the billions already spent on bombing a country in which almost nothing has been left standing.

Cuba demands that the General Assembly, the Security Council and the United Nations Organization as a whole take up once again, as top priorities, the debate of these problems on which depend the lives of 4.5 billion inhabitants of the third world, whose rights and hopes have also been buried under the rubble of the World Trade Center.

Cuba reiterates its categorical condemnation of the terrorist acts committed last 11 September. Cuba reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Cuba reiterates that it will not allow its territory ever to be used for terrorist acts against the people of the United States or of any other country.

Cuba has the will to do this because it has suffered terrorist acts for over 40 years; because in Cuba there are still the relatives of the nearly 3,500 Cubans killed as a result of acts of aggression and terrorism; and because justice is still demanded by the more than 2,000 Cubans disabled by acts of aggression and terrorism. Some of Cuba's sons and daughters who fought against terrorism have become the victims of

cruel persecutions, merciless treatment and unjust and slanderous trials.

The people of the United States are victims not only of terrorism and panic but also of the lack of truthful information, manipulation and the questionable curbing of their freedoms. Cuba does not nurture any hatred towards the American people, whom we do not hold responsible for our suffering caused by terrorism, acts of aggression and the unfair economic war that we have had to withstand during almost an entire lifetime. We share with the American people the aspiration of one day having relations based on respect and cooperation.

If anyone here takes offence at these words uttered on behalf of a small, generous and courageous people, I apologize. We speak in a straightforward manner. Words exist to uphold the truth, not to conceal it. We rebel against injustice and oppression. We have the moral resolution. We defend our ideals with our lives. Our support can be won for any just cause, but we will not be overcome by force, or allow absurd slogans or shameful campaigns to be forced upon us.

For many years now, we have proclaimed that for us Cubans, the historical dilemma is: "Motherland or Death!" From this comes our confidence and sureness that we are and will continue to be a worthy, sovereign and just people.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to urge once again that speakers cooperate in limiting their statements to 15 minutes each so that the projected schedules of the General Assembly can proceed without much delay.

I now give the floor to The Honourable Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kadirgamar (Sri Lanka): Every speaker from this podium during the special debate on terrorism, the debate on dialogue among civilizations and our current general debate has said, suggested or implied that 11 September has changed the world irrevocably. Indeed it has. A democracy is an open society. Movement is free. Speech is free. All the citizens of a democratic society are free to lead their lives in freedom, subject only to the rule of law. Fear and the spirit of democratic freedom are two totally opposite states of mind. Yet, today, fear stalks the United States of America, where democracy has flourished vigorously for so long, bringing prosperity to its people and taking human achievement to unimagined heights of excellence.

There can be no argument that terror in all its manifestations must be fought relentlessly and globally. Gone are the days when a country affected by terror, as my country has been for two decades, can be told by the international community, "We are sorry about what is happening in your land, but there is nothing we can do to help you because we have no laws to combat terror." When our Central Bank was bombed and destroyed, when the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, one of the holiest shrines of Buddhism, was bombed and saved from destruction only by a miracle, when a commuter train carrying workers home was attacked with explosives, when thousands of people, including monks, women and children were slaughtered, when Muslims were massacred in a mosque while at prayer, when a President of Sri Lanka, Ministers and Members of Parliament and many other elected leaders were assassinated, let alone a Prime Minister of India, when a suicide bomber at an election rally attacked the incumbent President of Sri Lanka, killing and wounding scores of innocent bystanders and grievously wounding her in the right eye, the sight of which was lost — all this and much more has happened at the hands of a terrorist group in Sri Lanka — we received merely sympathies, condolences, expressions of shock and outrage, while the funding that fuels the terrorism in my country went on apace in the great, liberal democracies of the West. When half of the aircraft in our national airline were damaged or destroyed by those same terrorists on 24 July, we were advised by some Governments to negotiate. We were reminded that "violence begets violence".

That approach has changed dramatically in recent days, or so it seems, because terrorism has assailed the national interests of many countries. Terrorism is no longer the curse of the poor. Now, more than ever before, when a terrorist attack takes place somewhere in the world, "never send to know for whom the bell tolls", as John Donne said nearly four centuries ago, for surely "it tolls for thee".

The United Nations has focused sharply on building consensus to fight terror. Two important United Nations conventions were adopted with admirable speed — the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings and the International Convention for the Suppression of the

Financing of Terrorism. Another important convention is being considered at this session by the Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism, which is chaired by Sri Lanka. Since we have been so severely affected by terrorism, it is only natural that we should play a leading role in designing the legislation that the international community should adopt and implement to combat terrorism.

There is a particularly abhorrent brand of terrorism that the world can never condone — that is, the forcible conscription of young children for battle, widely practiced by the terrorists of Sri Lanka and well documented by Amnesty International, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. It would be a permanent blot on humankind's conscience if these poor children were to be consigned, unnoticed and uncared for, to their miserable fate.

While terrorism must continue to be fought, relentlessly and by everyone everywhere, sooner rather than later the international community will have to focus its collective attention on the question of analysing and diagnosing the causes of terrorism, preventing and finally eliminating it before it becomes a problem of such deadly dimensions that it threatens the whole world. The causes of terrorism cannot be ignored. To examine the roots of terrorism and the culture in which it breeds in a systematic, objective, well-informed manner is not, by any means, to yield to terrorism. It is not a manifestation of weakness for the international community to examine the root causes of terrorism. It is axiomatic that a contented people do not rise up to destroy the society in which they live. If the world has become a village, surely we must take care to ensure that the villagers living down one road in the village are not given cause to become resentful and angry at the opulence enjoyed by other villagers living down another road, only a stone's throw away.

Might I suggest, therefore, that this General Assembly consider the convening of an international group of eminent persons with the appropriate backgrounds in all relevant fields, representative of all regions of the world, appointed by the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General, with the request that the group report to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretary-General within an appropriate time frame on terrorism and its prevention.

Thus, inescapably we will have to revisit and re-address the old questions that have haunted the United Nations ever since it was born — that is, the questions of poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance and injustice. These questions have been with us for a long time. They have received answers which are, to a large extent, no more than faint-hearted attempts to forge solutions that look grand on paper but are incapable of implementation due to the lack of funds and the lack of political will.

The formulation of policy has always been far easier than its implementation and, when we look to the future through the ultimate prism — namely, the funding available — we face once more the bitter truth of which our colleagues from the developed world have been warning us year after year: "the funding globally available is far from promising".

We in the developing world have also been warning our colleagues for so long, when a developing country is unable to generate a sufficient amount of domestic capital, public or private, it is to international capital that we, in the developing world, have to turn; and, as international private capital is sensitive to the rate and continuance of profitable return, it is only official development assistance (ODA) that remains.

On 8 November, only a few days ago, at the European Union's (EU) Development Council in Brussels, a common statement was delivered by the five Ministers for Development Cooperation of Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Their words convey far more effectively, and with far greater authority, than my words could possibly do, the thoughts of developing countries on the question of development aid, and, therefore, I take the liberty of quoting that common statement in its entirety:

> "In the Millennium Declaration, the international community recognized the fight against poverty as the greatest challenge to our global governance system".
>
> "The events of 11 September have made it even more crucial to deal with these problems. We not only need a global coalition against terrorism. We need a global coalition against poverty as well.
>
> "The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, at the Conference on

the Least Developed Countries in May 2001, remarked that only a few countries have lived up to the goals of devoting 0.7 percent of their gross national product (GNP) to official development assistance (ODA), and that the least developed countries suffer disproportionately as a result of that.

"We need better and more effective development assistance: policy coherence, lower transaction costs by harmonization of procedures. We need sharper focus on the importance of strong institutions and sound economic and social policy. But we cannot expect to reach our common goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015 without increasing aid volume."

I continue to quote from the common statement:

"There is no need for a new set of standards. All United Nations members, with the exception of the United States, have accepted a long established standard volume of ODA for donor countries: 0.7 percent of GNP. But the international community is still a long way from making this standard a reality.

"Although the EU has stressed the importance of the 0.7 percent target in the conclusions of the European Council in Göteborg, the EU's record is no exception: in 2000, member States gave an average of only 0.33 per cent of GNP in ODA. This is better than the OECD average of 0.24 per cent, but it is still a long way from the target."

"In fact, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Luxembourg are the only EU member States that meet the ODA standard. Norway, a non-EU member, is also part of this exclusive club. Luxembourg, the newest member of this group, has proved that it is possible to raise ODA to 0.7 per cent of GNP in a short period of time. Together we make up the G-0.7.

"The G-7 is full of promises. If all the rich countries would just implement what they have committed themselves to, as the G-0.7 have done, we would not encounter these financial constraints. Having said that, we do realize that ODA is not the only way forward. We also must take into account fair distribution of resources, debt relief, open markets, good governance and the role of the private sector. A reform of the Common Agricultural Policy is a great challenge to the EU.

"We welcome new and innovative financing options, but the main problem is that some countries are not providing adequate ODA resources. Obviously there is a lack of political commitment in setting budget priorities. These countries need to change their political priorities in order to comply with their international commitments.

"EU Declarations like the one made in Göteborg do call for that much needed compliance — that is to say, they call on us to keep the promises we have already made — but they do so only in general terms. We now need to pick up the pace.

"We call on EU members to make a firm commitment at the International Conference on Finance for Development in Monterrey in 2002 and to formulate individual plans and timetables in order to make concrete progress in reaching the goal of 0.7 per cent of GNP to ODA.

"Today's EU Development Council in Brussels is a good opportunity to further strengthen the relations in our global world. It should send a long awaited signal that we are serious about our commitments to developing countries."

I wish to place on record the high appreciation of my Government to the Governments of Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden for those frank and refreshing observations.

We in the developing world will certainly look with much expectation to the International Conference on Financing for Development that will convene in March next year. We cannot but hope that, notwithstanding the continuing difference in positions, a secure foundation for a partnership for the future will be formed there, within which both the strong interests of the developing world and the strong concerns of the developed world can be adequately accommodated.

And I would think that undoubtedly the developed world too will, after the events of 11 September, look to the future with a frame of mind different from its frame of mind before that fateful date. Development, stability and contentment for all

people are no longer charitable objectives. They are in the self-interest of all.

Most certainly, neither we in the developing world nor those in the developed world can allow abject, desperate poverty, without any hope of a better future, to become a fertile field for those who wish to fan the flames of discord and hate and make it their business to wreak death, destruction, terror and mayhem.

Fifty-six years ago almost to this day, the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was proclaimed in words that have a prophetic resonance today:

> "... since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed;
>
> "... ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war;
>
> "... the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races;
>
> "... a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and...the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind."

These are noble words of timeless quality. But words, however noble, which remain untranslated into deeds become shallow, tawdry, degraded.

All nations, all the peoples of the world, must realize that we are slipping into a crisis of a kind we have never encountered before. The spectres of fear, doubt, uncertainty, mistrust and suspicion stalk the world. The hour is late. The hour is grave.

The President: I call on Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain.

Shaikh Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): This session is taking place amid feelings of sadness and grief that prevail following the terrorist acts of 11 September that befell the United States. They victimized the thousands, from more than 80 countries, who were working in the World Trade Center in the City of New York when the vicious attack took place, and also resulted in great material and economic damage.

My country, the State of Bahrain, moved quickly to condemn the terrorist attacks in New York, just a few kilometres from the Headquarters of the United Nations, and in Washington, D.C. The Emir of Bahrain, Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, expressed to Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, and to the friendly people of the United States of America the deep condolences of the Emir, the Government and the people of the State of Bahrain for the victims of these wicked attacks, which run counter to the teachings of all divine religions as well as the basic tenets of humanity and the standards of cultural values.

The State of Bahrain has supported the international alliance against terrorism. It has offered its cooperation as a participant in efforts and measures to eliminate terrorism and terrorists as well as their havens and financial resources. We have done so out of our firm and principled position against terrorism and our rejection of all forms of violence and extremism. Such violence and extremism contradict the teachings of true Islam and its tolerant values, as well as all lofty cultural and human values in which we believe and which we support.

The State of Bahrain also followed and participated in the debates on combating terrorism during this session of the General Assembly. It shares the opinion of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, that the shocking events of 11 September have united the world against terrorism, as demonstrated by the condemnation of those horrific attacks expressed by millions of people from all societies. We also share the Secretary-General's opinion that, because of its unique structure, the United Nations has an important role to play in mobilizing the international community in countering and combating terrorism.

As part of its policy of cooperation with international efforts, the State of Bahrain welcomed Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which dealt

with the issue of terrorism, in particular operative paragraph 6, which requests Member States to report to the Security Council Committee within 90 days on the steps taken to implement the resolution.

While expressing our feelings of sadness at the horror of the events of 11 September, we must also warn against the danger of exploiting the events to link terrorism to Islam. Islam is a religion of amity and tolerance, and we would like to warn against the danger of stirring up hostility against Muslims and of igniting a conflict between religions and civilizations, instead of dialogue and interaction among them for the good of all societies and people of different races and beliefs. In this context, we are pleased to welcome the position taken by the United States of America and other friendly countries in calling on their citizens to refrain from harming their residents or citizens of Arab and Muslim descent and reaffirming the spirit of tolerance, interaction and dialogue among religions and cultures.

The United Nations, which is the ideal tool for confronting international terrorism, faces other challenges that stand in the way of cooperation for prosperity, economic and social development and the building of a world in which justice, peace and equality prevail.

In this regard, this year the United Nations held several special sessions of the General Assembly, one on human settlements and the other on HIV/AIDS, as well as a Conference on small arms. The Economic and Social Council also convened conferences on information technology, the eradication of poverty and financing for development, as well as the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which was hosted by the Republic of South Africa.

The State of Bahrain endorsed the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and today — on the basis of its deep-rooted civilization and sustained revival aimed at strengthening the foundations of the modern State, attaining comprehensive development, further invigorating the mechanisms of civil society and public institutions in order to enable its citizens to understand current issues and the need for further advancement — it reaffirms its determination to continue shouldering its national, regional and international responsibilities, with a view to achieving the common purposes and principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations and the Millennium Declaration.

In this context, His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Emir of the State of Bahrain, took the initiative to establish a national committee that includes representatives from all sectors of Bahraini society. This committee prepared a draft Charter for national action, which was approved in a free referendum by a majority of 98.4 per cent of the people of Bahrain, and was ratified by His Highness the Emir in February this year. This Charter is part of a comprehensive plan to develop Bahraini society, update its systems and institutions and transform it into a modern State capable of participating effectively in the new world order and of facing the challenges and requirements of the era.

This historic step was coupled with a number of measures to improve and update constitutional and democratic institutions, reaffirm the rule of law, achieve justice, equality and equal opportunities and enhance popular participation. Foremost among these are developments in the field of human rights, which have confirmed the participation of women and enhanced their role in civil society, including their right to vote and to run for elected office, as well as the establishment of the Human Rights Committee of the Shura Council and the establishment of the Supreme Council for Women. The Council's mandate includes, inter alia, proposing public policies in the field of development and enhancing the role of women in civic and constitutional State institutions. Proud of its accomplishments in the political, economic and social fields and reiterating its determination to press ahead with its comprehensive development plans to build a modern State capable of reaffirming its international position and consolidating its relations with various countries of the world, the State of Bahrain would also like to express its thanks and appreciation for the support given by many States of our Organization to the worthy steps taken by His Highness the Emir.

Bahrain's determination to imbue its relations with others with a spirit of friendship and cooperation is evidenced by its fraternal, amicable and close relations with brotherly and friendly States. Such relations are based on mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of others and the promotion of good-neighbourly relations and cooperation among States. In this respect, it is worth noting the position of both the State of Bahrain and the State of Qatar on the

judgement handed down by the International Court of Justice on 16 March this year, which brought to an end the border dispute between the two brotherly countries. The statements issued by the leaders of both countries said that the judgement, which was accepted by the two countries, had opened a new page in relations between them, based as they are on agreement and cooperation aimed at achieving their common interests, and that it represented the triumph of international legitimacy and the principles of international law.

It is regrettable that the ramifications of the dangerous events witnessed in the Gulf region over the past 20 years constitute an ongoing threat to the security and stability of the region and an obstacle to its development and growth. The State of Bahrain, which would like to see regional and international security prevail, especially in the Gulf region, which has strategic importance and in which various countries of the world have vital interests, calls once again upon Iraq to cooperate with the United Nations and to fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular those relating to weapons of mass destruction and to the release of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and detainees and those of other nationalities, so that efforts to lift the sanctions and to end the suffering of its brotherly people may succeed.

The State of Bahrain also hopes that, in the light of the positive developments in relations between the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Islamic Republic of Iran, a peaceful solution can be reached in the current dispute between the latter and the United Arab Emirates over the three islands, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, all of which belong to the United Arab Emirates. The State of Bahrain approves of and welcomes the direct contacts that have taken place between the two neighbouring countries and hopes that the dispute will be settled by peaceful means in accordance with the principles of international law, including referral to the International Court of Justice.

Since the current Israeli Government came to power, the Middle East has experienced serious developments that have brought back conditions of hostility and confrontation such as engulfed the region prior to the beginning of the Madrid peace process in 1991. This has come about through Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people and its oppression, economic isolation and blockades of all the territory under Palestinian authority.

The peace process based on Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and on the Madrid terms of reference — specifically the principle of land for peace — is at an impasse. The explosive situation in the Palestinian Authority's territories, with all its inherent risks, including the threat to security and stability in the Middle East and to the interests of the Authority and other States, requires the international community, and primarily the sponsors of the peace process, to shoulder their responsibilities to put the peace process back on track so that its objectives may be achieved.

This can be done only through the full implementation of Security Council resolutions calling for a complete withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied by Israel in the Syrian Golan Heights up to the boundaries of 4 June 1967 and from the remaining occupied territories of the Republic of Lebanon, and through full recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its rights of return and to the establishment of its own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. In this regard, we welcome the statement made by President Bush of the United States of America on the right of the Palestinian people — supported by the European Union, the permanent members of the Security Council and the international community — to establish a Palestinian State.

The role of the United Nations and the reform of its machinery to enable it to face its challenges and overcome them collectively are among the priorities of the Charter that were reinforced by the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration calls on us to uphold the rule of law nationally and internationally, to respect human rights and to conduct international relations in such a way as to preserve world security, peace, development and stability.

In praising the role of the United Nations, I should also like to take this opportunity to convey my warm and sincere congratulations to Mr. Kofi Annan, whom the Member States have unanimously re-elected as Secretary-General for a second term in office in recognition of his tireless efforts to allow the Organization to play its full role and to achieve its objectives. Through those efforts, the Secretary-General and the United Nations under his leadership have fully deserved the Nobel Peace Prize for this year in appreciation of their great contribution to maintaining international peace and security. I

congratulate the Secretary-General and the United Nations on that honour.

I also have the pleasure to extend to you, Sir, and to your friendly country, the Republic of Korea, our congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. I express the hope that you will succeed in carrying out your tasks. I also thank your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, and commend his invaluable efforts in conducting the proceedings of that session and of the special sessions held in conjunction with it.

We believe firmly that the destiny of the human race is a common destiny, given that we all live in one world. We are therefore duty-bound to preserve that world and to protect it from the threats of war, international terrorism, conflict, disease and poverty. It is incumbent on us, the peoples of the United Nations, as stated in the Charter, to choose to practice tolerance and to live according to the will of Almighty God as peoples that cooperate in the pursuit of friendship, justice, peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Roberto Rojas López, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica.

Mr. Rojas López (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to preside over the work of this General Assembly. We are familiar with your valuable personal qualities and appreciate the leadership of your country, the Republic of Korea, in the concert of nations. I would also like to express my gratitude to the outgoing President, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for his excellent work.

I should like to express the deepest condolences of the people and Government of Costa Rica to the Government of the Dominican Republic and to the relatives and friends of the more than 200 Dominican nationals who lost their lives in the tragic aeroplane accident that occurred here yesterday.

This year, the General Assembly is meeting in extraordinary circumstances. Only two moths ago, this city fell victim to the most dreadful and despicable terrorist attack in world history. Even today, just a few kilometres from this Hall, we can contemplate, bewildered, the column of smoke that marks the remains of the twin towers. The rubble reminds us of the destruction pain and death caused by violence and irrational hatred. Therefore, I cannot let pass this opportunity without reiterating the deepest condolences of the people and Government of Costa Rica to the people and Government of the United States.

On 11 September, the terrorists targeted not only New York, but the whole of humankind. Today, we all are victims of terrorism. Costa Rica realizes that terrorism is an extremely grave crime against humanity that victimizes the innocent civil population and endangers the international community as a whole. For this reason, we condemn terrorism categorically in all its forms and manifestations, wherever and by whomever committed, while we proclaim that there is no political, philosophical, racial, ethnic or religious justification that legitimizes the commission of this crime.

The recent terrorist attacks force us to rethink the concept of international security and to renew our commitment to mankind's basic values. When faced with cruel fear and hatred, we must raise the flag of civilization, tolerance and brotherhood. In the face of irrational violence, we must take up the arms of reason, law and order. Against terrorism, we must resort to the rule of law, justice and due process through international cooperation in the judicial and law enforcement fields.

Faced with new treats to international security, the community of nations must create effective and precise mechanisms to ensure peace and development for all peoples. In this context, we welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). It constitutes a firm, proportionate and necessary answer to the despicable acts of 11 September.

Furthermore, we welcome the progress achieved in the negotiation of a comprehensive convention to proscribe and punish terrorism in all its forms. My delegation has taken active part in the recent negotiations to solve the outstanding issues, and we are grateful to the Secretary-General for his personal involvement in obtaining a consensus solution. We call upon all delegations to be flexible and to agree to the consensus formula proposed by the coordinator of the contact group on this issue.

The struggle against terrorism must lead us to build a true culture of peace and life. Right now, we have the duty to plant the seeds of peace in order to substitute the vices of destruction and conflict with the

virtues of fraternity, tolerance and cooperation among all men and women.

Currently, thanks to scientific and technological progress, we can defeat disease, poverty, famine, hatred and war. We now posses the necessary economic, technological and philosophical means to guarantee to each and every person the highest standards of life and the necessary conditions for their fullest physical, intellectual and spiritual development.

In this context, the United Nations could and should play a central role in building a future of peace and freedom. This Organization must be a bastion against war, hatred and poverty. This institution must be a beacon that lights the way and points towards the final goal.

To this end, the respect of human rights and promotion of human dignity, in all spheres, must be the crux of the activities of the United Nations. The protection of human beings is the only justification for peacekeeping activities. The promotion of human dignity is the only legitimate reason for pursuing sustainable development. The protection of human life is the only justification for the protection of the environment or search for economic development. The philosophy of this Organization must therefore be deeply humane.

The protection of human rights is the cornerstone of Costa Rica's foreign policy. Costa Ricans loathe every violation of fundamental rights. We reject intolerance, hatred, inequality and war. We condemn extrajudicial executions, the death penalty, abortion, forced displacement, torture, rape and hostage-taking. We categorically condemn all restrictions on freedom of speech and thought. The ethical values of the Costa Rican identity make us proclaim a more just and humane society and demand greater solidarity.

This Organization's work in the area of human rights is outstanding. The codification efforts and the periodic conferences have provided the international community with clear guidelines of conduct. Now, we must concentrate our efforts in the implementation of those norms at all levels of society, placing special emphasis on the fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights.

In particular, it is necessary to rationalize and coordinate the work of the monitoring organs, including the Commission on Human Rights, in order to make them more effective. Costa Rica considers it necessary to review the national reports system in order to make it more transparent and expeditious. We believe that Member States must open their borders in a candid and forthright manner to the human rights rapporteurs that are appointed by the Commission. This obligation flows directly from the commitments undertaken under Articles 55 and 56 of the Charter. Simultaneously, we must respond positively to the request for additional resources made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Moreover, the United Nations must remain vigilant so as to deal with the new challenges that threaten the enjoyment of human rights.

We are concerned by the recent developments in the area of cloning and biotechnology. For this reason, we welcome the proposal by France and Germany to negotiate an international agreement to prohibit the reproductive cloning of human beings. We believe that such an instrument should also forbid other forms of experimentation in biotechnology that are contrary to both human life and dignity.

We must strengthen the family as the basic building block of society. The family is indispensable for the formation of healthy, productive and responsible citizens. We must also make additional efforts to support parents in the education of their children. In this regard, my country recently enacted a special law on responsible parenthood that ensures, through unprecedented and resolute judicial means, that all biological fathers will be responsible for the education and care of any offspring born out of wedlock.

The efforts to maintain international peace and security must also be seen from the point of view of human rights. Armed conflicts produce continuous humanitarian crises and atrocities. As long as war exists, it will be impossible to ensure respect for the basic human rights. In situations of armed conflict, all necessary measures must be taken to protect the security of innocent civilians. It is crucial to provide them with immediate assistance, in order to prevent greater loss of life and destruction. It is also necessary to protect the human rights of refugees and displaced persons. Furthermore, at the end of an armed conflict, greater international cooperation is required to rebuild the national economy and lost infrastructure and to return life to normal.

For several years, my delegation has advocated the strengthening of the Security Council. We have said that it is the only mechanism that humanity has to confront the threats that beset it. Costa Rica has questioned the Council when it has ignored its duties and has been reduced to irrelevance. We have criticized it when it has confined itself to giving weak and inadequate answers to the gravest political and humanitarian emergencies. We have denounced it when it has been unable to act because of an irresponsible use of the veto or the defence of national interests of certain of its members. Today, the adoption of resolution 1373 (2001) gives us new hope. We are confident that, in the future, the Security Council will confront other emergency situations with the same decisiveness, promptness and effectiveness.

Weapons are a catalyst for armed conflicts. Their proliferation fans the flames of violence; exacerbates fighting and hatred; aggravates crime and terrorism; and fosters political and social instability. Military arsenals prolong armed conflicts and impede peace processes, while the armies consume insatiably the meagre national resources. To attain peace, it is necessary to forbid the transfer of arms to rebel, extremist or terrorist groups. The transfer of weapons to Governments that commit systematic human rights violations, do not respect democratic principles or have not ratified the main instruments of international humanitarian law should also be forbidden. We believe that it is essential to regulate the possession of light weapons by civilians.

My country condemns the unilateral and disproportionate use of force and countermeasures, while it supports the mechanisms and principles enshrined in international law. We must embrace negotiation, dialogue, mediation and the judicial resolution of disputes. For this reason, Costa Rica fully endorses and has full confidence in the excellent work of the International Court of Justice. We believe that the voluntary acceptance of its obligatory jurisdiction, through optional declarations, is clear proof of good faith. However, we cannot fail to express our deep concern about the existence and emergence of new reservations on the voluntary acceptance of the Court's jurisdiction. Good faith in international relations demands the withdrawal of those reservations.

True and sustainable peace can be achieved only when decent living conditions are guaranteed to all people; when there is a level of economic development sufficiently advanced so that everyone can satisfy his or her basic needs; when basic human rights are respected; and when social and political differences are resolved through democratic means, dialogue and negotiation. Therefore, it is essential to invest intensively and systematically in our human resources, devoting all necessary resources to education and health. Only an educated population can live in freedom, only a healthy population can work for development and only a cultured population can integrate itself in the globalized contemporary world.

Similarly, it is necessary to ensure the sustainable use and management of natural resources. Without a healthy environment it is impossible to attain decent living conditions, both for the present and for the future. We cannot ignore the damage caused to future generations by the destruction of thousands of square kilometres of the earth's forests.

Costa Rica has developed a national system of payments for environmental services with a view to alleviating the impact of greenhouse gases and preserving our forests for mankind. My country has devoted one quarter of its national territory to the protection of its forests. The production of environmental goods and the provision of environmental services have become an engine of national development. For these reasons, my country will be honoured to be the host country of the first ministerial meeting of the United Nations Forum on Forests, which will be held in March 2002. We look forward to the active and constructive participation of all Member States in that meeting.

My delegation notes with concern the growing inequality in the area of vulnerability. The States with the most fragile economies and whose inhabitants have fewer resources for prevention and reconstruction are the ones that suffer most from the effects of natural disasters. In our region, Central America, we have been the victims of several disasters that, in the course of the past decade, have caused very serious human and material losses. The lack of financial resources imposes a harsh limit on the poorest nations' capacity to prevent humanitarian emergencies. Therefore, we advocate an increase in international cooperation with developing nations to enable them to design and implement programmes to reduce their vulnerability.

In this context, I would like to mention the bilateral assistance that the Republic of China in

Taiwan has given our region to face these emergencies. Costa Rica understands and supports the repeated efforts of the Republic of China in Taiwan, with 23 million inhabitants and a firm process of democratic development and strengthening, to obtain representation within this Organization. That country also constitutes one of the main industrial centres of the Asian basin, with which most Member States have strong commercial and technical exchange ties. We hope that all differences will soon be put aside so that it will be possible to achieve agreements and both branches of the Chinese people will be able to participate jointly in international forums.

Just a couple of months ago we witnessed the bloody and abominable impact of international terrorism. Those despicable acts shook the conscience of humanity as a whole. In these circumstances, the world awaits the guidance of the United Nations. Our peoples demand the decisive and firm action of the international community. Humanity as a whole calls on us to fulfil the lofty goals that we undertook when we established this Organization.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Anna Lindh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Lindh (Sweden): Let me start by congratulating the United Nations and its Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. This is an extremely well-deserved award to a unique Organization and a unique Secretary-General.

Let me also take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences to the families of the victims of yesterday's tragedy near John F. Kennedy Airport.

We are all going through days of sorrow and anger: sorrow for human suffering, for the loss of human lives and for loss of security; anger, because terrorists hit innocent people and because terror is targeted at openness and democracy and threatens our common security and welfare.

Seldom has the international community been challenged as it was through the terrorist acts of 11 September. The United Nations rose to the challenge and took the lead in the struggle against international terrorism. Seldom have we — the peoples of the United Nations — shown such a strong common reaction and unity. Sweden stands wholeheartedly by the United Nations in its call to fight terrorism, and we express our solidarity with the American people and Government at this difficult time.

We have now three immediate tasks. First, all nations have to take action against terrorism, as stated in Security Council resolution 1373 (2001): action against the financing, planning and execution of terrorist acts; and action that makes it clear to those responsible for terror that they will be punished for their acts.

We support the right of the United States Government to self-defence, in accordance with international law. We emphasize the central role of the Security Council.

Secondly, we must assist the people of Afghanistan in their immediate needs. The Afghan people have suffered war, natural disasters and oppression for decades. They are held hostage by an illegitimate regime. Women and children are systematically abused. Women are denied health care and work; girls are practically denied education; and their freedom is heavily restricted. Human rights do not exist under Taliban rule. It is crucial that in all cities now liberated from the Taliban human rights and law and order be guaranteed.

The humanitarian situation facing the people of Afghanistan is acute. The United Nations and all its Member States must increase their efforts to meet the needs of the Afghan population. Closed borders must be opened immediately, both for refugees who seek asylum and for the secure transport of emergency supplies.

Thirdly, we must assist the people of Afghanistan in the reconstruction of their country. The restoration of this ravaged nation to a state of peaceful coexistence must involve a political process leading to a representative government that respects human rights and fosters democratic development. The role, protection and participation of women must be high on every policy agenda.

While addressing these immediate tasks, we must not lose sight of our long-term agenda.

A year ago, here in New York, heads of State and Government from 147 countries adopted the Millennium Declaration. Their message was clear: only by working together can we meet the challenges of globalization.

Today we need to build coalitions and to join forces, not only against international terrorism, but also to fight other global problems. We need to join forces in the fight for global justice. Globalization and openness make people aware of what they have, and of what they lack. People wish to participate. People wish to share the benefits of development. This is positive and represents a challenge to the international community's ability to narrow the gap between rich and poor.

Globalization creates wealth, but that wealth must be more equally distributed. Today, more than one billion people live in absolute poverty. The Millennium Summit pledged to halve poverty by the year 2015. This is a welcome commitment, but it is still not enough. Political efforts should be combined with economic, technical and scientific progress. Development cooperation, trade and agricultural policies must aim at poverty eradication. The instruments are there, and the possibilities today are better than ever before, but we, the Governments, need to show courage and political will. We must provide hope of freedom for the oppressed, education for the illiterate, food for the hungry, health care for the sick and equality for women.

Increased official development assistance is therefore crucial. Sweden is one of the few countries meeting the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income in development aid. I urge all developed countries, in particular the big economic Powers, to make real progress towards achieving this goal.

The poorer countries must be integrated into the world economy, and the new United Nations road map is a concrete and welcome step in this direction. The International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Mexico, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg — in which the Swedish Prime Minister, Mr. Göran Persson, will participate — could be the starting points for new partnership arrangements between Government institutions, civil society and the private sector — a partnership for global justice.

HIV/AIDS is one of the greatest threats to humanity in our time. In some countries, large parts of entire generations fall victim to the disease. Millions of children are orphaned. Economic progress is hampered, and development opportunities are lost. All Member States must show strong political and financial commitment and solidarity. Sweden welcomes the new global fund to fight HIV/AIDS and will contribute $60 million over the next three years to the fund.

A new round of broad negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) can make an important contribution to worldwide growth and development. But the interests and concerns of the developing countries must be properly addressed. Every effort must be made to liberalize trade. The example set by the European Union — to open its market to "everything but arms" — should be followed by others. Developing countries should receive support in building their capacity to fully integrate into the world trading system and the global economy.

The global responsibility in terms of providing more resources and greater market access to developing countries is clear. But the main responsibility for development rests with the Governments and peoples in developing countries. Good governance and sound national policies are prerequisites for sustained development and poverty reduction.

We need to join forces in the struggle for human rights and democracy. When rights are respected, when voices are heard, when society is tolerant, society also becomes safer for all.

Violations of human rights threaten the security and well-being not only of the individual but also of society, and they cause tensions and conflicts. Sustainable development and political stability can be built only on respect for universal and indivisible human rights and on democratic development.

Discrimination in any form is unacceptable and incompatible with these fundamental principles. It is the responsibility of every Government to safeguard equal rights and opportunities for men and women, as well as the rights of the child.

Those guilty of human rights violations and crimes against humanity should never find refuge behind national borders. The transfer of Mr. Milosevic to the International Tribunal demonstrates the resolve of the international community to act against impunity. It carries great symbolic value and will contribute to the process of reconciliation.

The establishment of the International Criminal Court will strengthen our ability to try suspected

violators of international and humanitarian law. It is a matter of the highest priority to have the Court operational promptly, and I urge those States which have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute.

Sweden also welcomes the initiative by the Secretary-General to involve global business in promoting human rights through the Global Compact.

We need to join forces to prevent violent conflicts. We need to work against hatred and suspicion between peoples and to stimulate a dialogue between and within cultures. Preventing violent conflict is a primary obligation of Member States under the United Nations Charter, but it took us half a century to start working towards this goal systematically. We now have a better understanding of the complex root causes of conflicts. The responsibility of preventing conflict ultimately rests on every Government. Successful long-term prevention cannot be imposed from the outside, but the local parties should be encouraged and assisted in containing an emerging conflict.

The Secretary-General's report on conflict prevention is a very valuable contribution to the development of a global strategy. I urge all Member States to take an active part in its follow-up.

A core task of the United Nations is to effectively manage conflicts where prevention fails. It is the United Nations that provides the legal foundation for global action. Sweden therefore strongly supports the process that the Brahimi report has set in motion. But we, the Member States, have yet to provide the United Nations with the necessary resources to strengthen its capacities in the area of peace operations.

The Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the ties between the United Nations and regional organizations in the areas of conflict prevention and peace-building are most welcome.

Cooperation with the United Nations is essential in developing the European Union's conflict-prevention and crisis-management capabilities. In Göteborg last June the Union adopted a framework for increased interaction, so that European Union capacities can provide real added value for the United Nations.

We need to join forces for peace in the Middle East. Our aim must be two States, Israel and Palestine, with secure and recognized borders. The basis is international law and the Security Council resolutions. The situation has deteriorated in the past year, despite strong efforts by the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, Russia and others. A further escalation must be avoided. Israel must withdraw from the occupied territories, cease the settlements policy and put an end to the extrajudicial executions. The Palestinians must do everything in their power to stop the attacks against innocent civilians. Sweden strongly supports the recommendations of the Mitchell report, including a monitoring mechanism, for an end to violence and a revival of the peace process.

We must join forces for multilateral disarmament. A world free from weapons of mass destruction would be a much safer world. Multilateral agreements contribute to security for the individual. They have produced impressive results — chemical and biological weapons have been totally banned. Still, however, many challenges remain.

Three years ago, Sweden helped launch the New Agenda Coalition — a group of States concerned with the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament and sharing a vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world. In our case, the initiative was rooted in the firm belief that both global and national security depend on multilateral frameworks and platforms.

Last year, the 187 States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) adopted by consensus a road map towards nuclear disarmament. Based on the undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to fully eliminate their nuclear arsenals, a 12-step action plan was agreed on. This promising outcome was also confirmed by the General Assembly. All States parties have pledged to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world under strict and effective international control. I strongly urge the four States remaining outside the Treaty to sign and ratify it.

We have a number of important instruments to prevent testing, to ban production of weapons material and to improve verification. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a fissile material cut-off treaty and the Additional Protocol to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement pave the way for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Now it is now time to concentrate on their implementation.

The United States plans for a strategic missile defence system risk having a negative impact on disarmament, non-proliferation and the whole NPT

process. The ongoing consultations are welcome, but the outcome is still uncertain. We strongly believe that the new threats of proliferation require a multilateral response built on the already existing safety net.

Deep cuts in strategic and tactical nuclear arsenals are long overdue and should be accompanied by effective mechanisms of verification and irreversibility. Such treaty agreements can never be replaced by unilateral declarations.

Weapons of mass destruction remain a threat to mankind. Terrorists must not be given the opportunity to threaten us with these weapons. Now is the time to reinforce efforts to contain proliferation.

The United Nations remains a unique global forum. It is the one organization we can all equally count on and turn to for security and development — as the safeguard of our common future. The United Nations needs to be strengthened, and it needs reform. We need the United Nations, and the United Nations needs us.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Goran Svilanović, the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Svilanović (Yugoslavia): Let me begin by congratulating Mr. Han Seung-soo on his election as President of the General Assembly. Your sterling credentials, Sir, and vast experience are a firm guarantee that our proceedings will run smoothly and bear fruit.

I would also like to congratulate the United Nations and the Secretary-General on the Nobel Peace Prize. The award is the acknowledgement of the important role our Organization has in protecting world peace and promoting social progress and human rights, as well as an acknowledgement of the successful leadership of the Secretary-General. This honour should be strong encouragement for all of us to put even more effort into achieving the purposes of the United Nations.

Let me also express our deepest sympathies to the families of the victims of yesterday's tragic plane crash.

The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September have affected not only the United States but all of us. Once again, we were painfully reminded that only together, with joint efforts, can we stand up to global challenges such as terrorism.

Terrorism is a universal evil, a crime against humanity itself. It equally affects people of every religion, nationality and walk of life. Therefore we did not hesitate to support fully all international actions against terrorism. In that context, it is particularly important to ensure the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and all international conventions against terrorism. On behalf of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, I have just signed the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. Yugoslavia has also taken a series of domestic measures to combat terrorism and has coordinated its actions with other States.

Having been confronted with terrorism for quite some time itself, Yugoslavia is well aware of how difficult it is to fight this evil. It is not enough to prevent terrorist attacks and to capture and punish the perpetrators. It is even more important to deal with the social causes of terrorism, in particular, to address issues of poverty and the lack of opportunity. It is also vital to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights everywhere in the world. Poverty breeds anger, and if not channelled into democratic political processes, anger can easily fuel extremism.

In this regard, the experience of Yugoslavia in dealing with terrorism in southern Serbia has shown that it is not sufficient to combat terrorism solely with security forces. We have therefore developed a comprehensive plan which, in addition to security measures, also aims at improving the economic situation in southern Serbia and reintegrating ethnic Albanians into the political process and State structures, especially at the local level. We are implementing this plan in cooperation with a number of international organizations, and this joint effort has proven to be successful. At this very moment, we are successfully training a multi-ethnic police force as an important confidence-building measure.

All this would not be possible without the victory of democratic forces in Yugoslavia last year. This democratic revolution showed the strong will of the Yugoslav people to live in a democratic society based on the rule of law, with full respect for human and minority rights and a sustainable market economy. It also showed their desire to live better lives in a more prosperous society, in peace with their neighbours and

as a part of the European family of nations. In order to achieve these goals, Yugoslavia has started a process of comprehensive political and economic reforms over the last year.

At the same time, we have to deal with several pressing issues which are of crucial importance for the country. Foremost among these issues is the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, southern Serbia and the redefinition of the Yugoslav Federation, as well as cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal established by the Security Council for the war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia. However, these questions do not concern Yugoslavia alone; they are also of vital political importance for the entire region of South-East Europe. My Government has approached all of them in a constructive way and with a desire to find political solutions through dialogue in a democratic environment.

Today, all countries in South-East Europe have democratically elected Governments, and all are striving to join European and Euro-Atlantic structures. At the same time, our region is still burdened with the legacy of the past 10 years and a number of outstanding issues, the main issue of which is the position of national minorities. The problems of the region are interrelated and must therefore be addressed by broad regional action and with the help of the international community. The solutions to be achieved should enjoy region-wide support.

I believe that the precondition for dealing with the problems in the region is to fully respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all countries. It must be clearly said that the era of disintegration in the Balkans has come to an end. This will enable us to address the main problem of South-Eastern Europe — the status of national minorities — with fewer reservations and much more openness. Solving the minority issues, together with more economic cooperation and new confidence-building measures, is the way to achieve lasting stability and prosperity in the region. Such an approach will be fully in concert with the wishes of all countries in the region, including Yugoslavia, to join the European integration processes. In that context, Yugoslavia supports the process of stabilization and association, inaugurated by the European Union at the Zagreb Summit last year, as well as other regional initiatives.

Kosovo and Metohija is the most pressing and immediate preoccupation of my Government. The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia fully complies with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). This is also what we rightly expect from others participating in its implementation and, in particular, neighbouring States.

Unfortunately, we are not satisfied with the situation in the field. There is no security for non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija; the return of expelled and displaced persons is difficult and slow, and there is no progress with respect to the issue of missing persons. Nonetheless, we signed the Common Document with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which should provide for comprehensive cooperation in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). This enabled the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Federal and Serbian Republican Governments to call on the Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija to take part in the elections. They did so fully convinced that participation in the elections is in the Serbs' best interest and that cooperation with the international community, particularly with UNMIK and KFOR, is the key to the solution of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija.

The elections to be held in Kosovo and Metohija on 17 November are important indeed; yet, it is only after the elections that I expect we will start even more extensive cooperation. This cooperation should be aimed at implementing Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) fully and at establishing democracy and promoting human rights in Kosovo and Metohija, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In that connection, my delegation welcomes the presidential statements issued by the Security Council on 5 October and 9 November 2001.

I take this opportunity to affirm the support of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for the efforts of the United Nations, particularly those of the Secretary-General, aimed at strengthening the role and place of the world Organization in present-day international relations.

Recalling the conclusions of the Millennium Assembly, we expect that the General Assembly, the main organ of the United Nations, will function more effectively. At the same time, the Organization should

be more efficient in order to address the challenges before us. The Security Council should adapt itself to the new relations in the international community.

We attach special significance to the international rule of law. It is of particular importance that all international crimes be punished before national and international courts. In that context, we firmly believe that the International Criminal Court should start its work as soon as possible. This is why my country has already ratified the Statute of Rome that establishes the Court.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that grave challenges are before us. We have to take concerted action to deal with them. We have to be wise in how we act because that will determine the outlook of the international system for many years to come.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, His Excellency Mr. Rashid Meredov.

Mr. Meredov (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, on behalf of the Turkmenistan delegation, I would like to express my deep condolences to the families and relatives of the victims of the air crash that happened yesterday in New York.

I have the honour, on behalf of Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov, the President of Turkmenistan, to congratulate the United Nations and Secretary-General Kofi Annan on receiving the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize, and I wish the United Nations every success in its effective and highly competent work aimed at solving the thorniest problems affecting today's world.

Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that your experience and knowledge will expedite the work of the General Assembly most effectively.

Turkmenistan is participating in the work of the United Nations General Assembly for the tenth time as an independent entity in international relations and for the sixth time as a State whose status of neutrality has been recognized by the community of nations. Since the adoption of the General Assembly resolution 50/80 on the Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan, which is of historic significance for us, our young State has consistently witnessed the support of the United Nations in striving for peace and in our foreign policy initiatives aimed at strengthening peace, security and stability. Taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to convey to the heads of delegations present here and to the representatives of the member States of the United Nations the words of gratitude from President Niyazov and assure you of Turkmenistan's unswerving commitment to its international obligations as a permanently neutral State.

Relations with the United Nations, based on close cooperation and strict observance of the fundamental principles of the Organization, have been and remain at the fore of Turkmenistan's foreign policy strategy. For us, the United Nations is the main and universal decision-making entity for the most crucial problems of global development. We share the view of the Organization itself that providing it with a new impetus in view of the rapidly changing realities of today's world is of the utmost relevance. In our view the main aspect of this new drive is respect for the overall balance of interests on the basis of the fundamental criteria underpinning the functioning of the Organization, its ideals, the letter and the spirit of the United Nations Charter. It is our firm belief that the United Nations has proven over the years of its existence that it represents the most effective and just mechanism for resolving international issues. It is the mainstay of the whole system of international stability and security.

Turkmenistan has always stood for, and continues to stand for, the strengthening and expansion of the United Nations role in the world. In this connection, we believe that international law and the United Nations Charter, which is based on principles of peace, equality, respect for nations and for their rights and sovereignty and choosing their own way of development, continue to serve as the basis for the world order in this new century. This belief reflects our principles as a neutral State, the entire philosophy of our country's foreign policy and our practice in this decade-long participation in regional and international affairs.

Turkmenistan attaches the utmost importance to its cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Our Government and the United Nations Development Programme jointly carry out a number of large-scale projects in the social and economic spheres that have yielded good results for the environment and many other areas, including health, education and ecology. Our cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United

Nations Population Fund and other agencies has been most effective. Turkmenistan will continue to maintain close ties with these important agencies of the United Nations in the search for new avenues of cooperation.

We consider interaction with United Nations bodies and agencies to be an important and useful instrument in our regional, economic, cultural and informational cooperation, as well as in our joint efforts with the Governments of neighbouring countries to implement other international programmes of various types. All of this undoubtedly fosters neighbourly relations and partnership ties in the region. Therefore, our country intends to focus in the future on maintaining the closest possible contact with the offices of United Nations specialized agencies, whose importance continues to grow.

Along these lines, I should like to draw particular attention to the situation that has emerged in our region since the tragic events of 11 September in the United States. It was with tremendous grief that the people of Turkmenistan heard the news from America. The President of Turkmenistan, on behalf of the people of our country, expressed sincere condolences to the families and relatives of victims, and he addressed words of consolation and compassion to all Americans.

These acts of terror have been unconditionally condemned in our country. The Government of Turkmenistan was one of the first to make a statement in support of international efforts to combat terrorism effectively. Turkmenistan recommended uniting such efforts under the auspices of the United Nations. Action needs to be closely coordinated by the members of the international community on the basis of international law, ensuring that no manifestation of terrorism in this world will go unpunished and making possible effective and legitimate measures to combat this evil.

Given what has happened, our country has cooperated actively with the United Nations in providing transportation through Turkmenistan for humanitarian supplies being sent to Afghanistan by United Nations specialized humanitarian relief agencies, including UNICEF, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme, as well as other governmental and non-governmental organizations. Turkmenistan's constructive position has received general support from the United Nations and the majority of States in the world.

We are greatly concerned over the situation in Afghanistan and the ongoing armed conflict in that country, which affects stability as well as social and economic development in the region. Turkmenistan shares the view that there is no alternative to a peaceful resolution of the Afghanistan question through negotiations. That is why we are convinced that the road to peace in this long-suffering country lies in political negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations. In this respect, we greatly appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General to enhance the role of the United Nations in finding a solution to the Afghan crisis, because it is precisely the United Nations that must play a role in working out international legal mechanisms to resolve the situation in Afghanistan.

As to the implementation of a strategy for peaceful development and cooperation in the region, I would like to stress that the foreign policy of neutrality pursued by Turkmenistan from the beginning follows precisely this path. This point also touches on the question of exploiting the valuable hydrocarbon deposits of the Caspian Sea Basin, which involves not only regional interests but also the interests of many other nations of the world as well as those of trans-national companies. It is our policy to take those interests into account.

Naturally, the oil and natural gas deposits in the Caspian Sea are extremely important energy resources for the twenty-first century. Their rational and effective exploitation, and the construction of an appropriate pipeline infrastructure to deliver these energy supplies to world markets, will ensure considerable economic growth for many States and the welfare of their people. The United Nations can play an important role in this process, as it is capable of creating a mechanism to guarantee the safe and unimpeded transportation of such raw materials along inter-State pipelines. As the Assembly will recall, Turkmenistan put forward this idea at the Millennium Summit and suggested that an international convention should be worked out in this regard.

Effective economic activity in the Caspian is inherently linked to ensuring stability in the Caspian region. Turkmenistan believes that the Caspian Sea area should be a zone of peace, stability and sustained

international cooperation based on the principles of justice and mutual respect.

It is clear that the problems now faced by Member States of the United Nations are complex and manifold. Their solution is possible not only through collective efforts but also through the necessary recognition of the individual role and responsibility of each nation as a member of the world community. It is this logic of political behaviour that Turkmenistan has in mind when it limits itself to the goals of strengthening peace and promoting economic, social and cultural development. Our country is always ready for constructive partnership, and the United Nations knows that it can always rely on Turkmenistan.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

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General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

51st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 13 November 2001, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by The Honourable Pierre Charles, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

The Honourable Pierre Charles, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Pierre Charles, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Charles (Dominica): I am pleased and honoured to address the Assembly on behalf of the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of Dominica. I wish to extend my congratulations to you, Sir, and your country, the Republic of Korea, on your election to the high office of President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, confident that your proven diplomatic skills will serve you well in guiding the affairs of the General Assembly with efficiency and purpose. Your immediate predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, is most deserving of our thanks and appreciation for the very able manner in which he presided over the Millennium Summit and the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Permit me further to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his election to a second term and on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to him and the United Nations.

This general debate is being conducted in unusual circumstances. The horrendous terrorist acts of 11 September 2001 have altered the lives of many in ways traumatic and fundamentally tragic. I must again extend deepest condolences and pledge the full support and solidarity of the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of Dominica to the Government and the people of the United States of America and to all bereaved families, including those who lost their loved ones on flight 587.

The ripple effects of those acts have resonated in locations far removed from New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, aggravating economic and social conditions and seriously disrupting efforts aimed at meeting the many challenges confronting the United Nations and the international community. In short, in one way or another and to a lesser or greater degree, we are all victims of those acts of terrorism that were visited upon the United States of America two months ago.

The Commonwealth of Dominica condemns, without reservation, what is undoubtedly the worst terrorist act of our times. We are in strong accord with the sentiments and mandates contained in Security Council resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001) and General Assembly resolution 56/1, all of which call

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upon the international community to take unified and cooperative action to prevent and eradicate acts of terrorism. We understand the need for the exercise of the right of self-defence in pursuit of those objectives, and we support the actions being taken to bring justice to the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of the terrorist acts of 11 September 2001.

Cognizant of the importance of international cooperation in the fight against terrorism, Dominica has proceeded to establish a task force to put in place the necessary legislative and executive measures for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). But to be effective beyond the immediate crisis, counter-terrorism measures, mechanisms and strategies must be sustained through a comprehensive approach that seeks to create and strengthen, through the United Nations, a legal framework against international terrorism, complemented by strenuous efforts aimed at improving the social and economic conditions which adversely affect the poor and dispossessed.

Beyond the immediate peace and security issues affected by the events of 11 September, there has been a considerable impact on the global economy, which has been thrown into an accelerated decline, with consequences that are particularly disturbing for small developing countries like the Commonwealth of Dominica. In the Caribbean there is strong evidence of damage to vital sectors of our economy, such as tourism, financial services and agriculture. The actual and projected losses of jobs in the region are in the thousands, and for those countries that were already experiencing fiscal pressures the prospect of higher unemployment and decreased revenues is daunting.

Complicating the problem is the great concern that in the fight against terrorism and in the drive to enforce counter-terrorism measures, certain areas in which developing countries in the Caribbean region have a competitive advantage, such as the financial services sector, may be subjected to inordinate pressure and be unfairly targeted and linked to illegal activities such as money-laundering. We are convinced that well-regulated, competitive tax jurisdictions should be treated separately and distinctly from illegal activities such as money-laundering. The Commonwealth of Dominica remains firmly committed to the struggle against international terrorism to the same extent that we strive to ensure that our financial services sector, a major pillar of our economic diversification thrust, does not provide support to the perpetrators of criminal activity in the financing of terrorism.

The current effort against international terrorism is important, and our focus on that activity is warranted. There are, however, other dimensions of the global agenda which should command the attention of the international community and the United Nations. They cannot be relegated to the back burner of our concerns. They comprise a wide range of economic, social, political and humanitarian problems faced on a daily basis and, for the most part, by the poor and disadvantaged of the world. Indeed, some of them are likely to be exacerbated by the fight against terrorism, and their successful resolution will continue to be the greatest challenge of the United Nations and the international community.

At the Millennium Summit last year there was general agreement on the issues needing urgent attention and the goals to be achieved. One year later those goals appear to be as far from being realized as ever. Commitment appears to be lacking on all fronts. The objective of a 50 per cent reduction in the number of persons living in poverty worldwide by the year 2015 suffers from the perennially tepid effort to deal with the root causes of poverty. Contributions from the industrial countries are woefully inadequate, and the required adjustment of the strategies of the international financial institutions is slow in coming. The outcome is less than desirable in creating and maintaining an enabling environment for the more effective management of projects geared to poverty reduction.

That lack of commitment is evident in other areas. A year after the Millennium Summit and six months after the General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS, the international community seems to have lost interest in a crisis that the Secretary-General labelled the greatest public health challenge of our times. As front-page news, HIV/AIDS claimed attention for only a short time after the special session, but the disease claimed millions of lives last year and created millions of orphans in sub-Saharan Africa, which continues to have the highest rates of infection. The Caribbean region ranks a close second.

The Global Fund for AIDS and Health proposed by the Secretary-General is clearly not realizing its spending target of $7 billion to $10 billion, and will not be able to achieve the stated goal of reversing the

spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015, as declared by world leaders at the Millennium Summit. The majority of people infected with HIV/AIDS live in the developing world and the high incidence of HIV/AIDS infection is considered a function of poverty. The circularity of the problem has tremendous implications for economic development, poverty reduction and efforts to raise living standards in developing countries. The accepted premise is that international development cooperation plays a vital role in the development of the mechanisms necessary for enhancing the trade competitiveness of developing countries, strengthening financial systems, and developing human resources, but that role is clearly undermined by the declining trend in official development assistance (ODA).

Mr. Orellana Rojas (Guatemala), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Once again we see the lack of commitment to the fulfilment of a stated goal. It is generally accepted that were industrialized countries to meet their promised official development assistance of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP), the countries of the developing world would be much nearer to solving many of the problems with which they are plagued. As a substitute for the failed promise, developing countries have been told to place greater reliance on foreign direct investment, most of which bypasses the most needy and the smallest economies. The Commonwealth of Dominica falls into that category of States for which official development assistance is vitally critical to the development of their economies. That is why the Commonwealth of Dominica and other States in the region attach such importance to the convening of the International Conference on Financing for Development, which will be held in Mexico from 18 to 22 March 2002. Given the changing global realities that are impacting adversely on the economies of developing States, the Conference will provide an opportunity for us to assess the impact of declining official development assistance and for creating new mechanisms for financing development.

Over the past several years and in many different forums, particularly in the World Trade Organization (WTO), we have been calling for the formal recognition of the special problems facing small vulnerable economies. We fear that without such recognition it will be impossible for small States to be fully integrated into the multilateral trading system of the globalized world. Our fears have been confirmed both by the generally poor performance of small States under WTO arrangements and by a very authoritative report by the World Bank and Commonwealth Secretariat on the issue of smallness and vulnerability. The unique characteristics of small vulnerable economies, which have been articulated in numerous studies, give a clear indication of the challenges that these economies face in improving their development prospects and in adjusting to liberalization and globalization. Many of these economies are at a crossroads. The reality is that trade preferences are eroding; official flows are declining, while historical ties with former partners in development are fading. It is therefore imperative that in order to prevent further marginalization of small economies, steps must be taken in the multilateral trading system and elsewhere to address the concerns of those economies and to ensure their growth and development.

The exclusion of the Republic of China on Taiwan from membership of the United Nations makes little sense in today's world of globalization and interdependence, particularly in light of the fact that this sovereign State, with a democratically elected Government, is the world's seventeenth largest economy, the fifteenth largest in international trade, the eighth largest foreign investor, the fourth largest in terms of foreign exchange reserves, and the third largest exporter of information technology (IT) products. The Commonwealth of Dominica intends no interference in the internal affairs of any Member State, nor can such interpretation be validly applied to our action. Our plea is a simple call for justice for the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan and an appeal for the recognition of their right to be treated in international affairs no differently from citizens of any other country.

The eleventh of September 2001 will undoubtedly be remembered for the horrifying nature of the terrorist acts, the magnitude of the senseless destruction of lives and property and the forced recognition of our common vulnerability. But the heroism, the extraordinary fortitude and selflessness of ordinary men and women, and the demonstrated triumph of the human spirit over the worst manifestation of evil, inspire us to hope that with dedicated commitment we can create for all mankind a world that is measurably better than that which we have today. The time to begin is now.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the

Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Pierre Charles, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted from the rostrum.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. George Papandreou, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Mr. Papandreou (Greece): Allow me to congratulate the President, Mr. Han Seung-soo, on his election and also to express my deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Holkeri, for his excellent work during the past year.

The nations that constitute this Organization are today attempting to draft a comprehensive convention against terrorism, a difficult but absolutely necessary task. We may not yet agree on how to define terrorism, however the world, with a near unanimous voice, condemned the 11 September events. The world showed solidarity with the American people, the United States Government, and President Bush. That highlights a simple truth and a profound consensus, a consensus that this was an act against humanity, a consensus that this was a crime against the values we hold dear as human beings and as societies, and a consensus that justice must be done.

From the ruins of this tragedy there rises a newborn moral strength, a clarion call to change this world, a call to create a moral order, a world community of values where a genuine sense of justice can prevail. It is in our hands today — in fact it is our responsibility to rise to this occasion, take a bold step beyond our traditional rivalries and consolidate a new spirit of cooperation. Let us make this a common fight for humanity. To do so we need not abandon our national interests. We do, however, need to place them in a wider context, a world order based on common practices, shared principles and global values. We must go beyond rhetoric. That also means that our responsibilities must reach beyond our borders. Whether it be a child who is suffering from AIDS in Africa, an Afghan refugee facing starvation, or a human being discriminated against because of race, sex or religion — these are today our shared responsibilities. Whether it be our threatened environment, the need for sustainable development, the need for equal educational opportunities, access to the Internet, or the inclusion of the poor in the fruits of development — these are today our shared responsibilities. Nuclear weapons proliferation, weapons of mass destruction and the protection of children in conflict situations — these also are today our shared responsibilities. No events could have made it clearer than did those we witnessed with horror on 11 September. We live in one world and no problem is only our neighbour's problem, it is also our problem.

That underlines the need for a universal response to the challenges that the citizens of this global village face. It underlines the need for standards concerning principles and practices that guarantee justice — from the Middle East to Cyprus, to Afghanistan and to Kosovo. The need for these principles underlines the pivotal role of the United Nations. I should like to express our warm support, respect and gratitude for the tireless efforts of Kofi Annan. Heartfelt congratulations to him and to the Organization he represents, the United Nations, on the award of this year's Nobel Peace Prize. It is a well-deserved accolade, an accolade that carries with it a heightened sense of responsibility to provide global governance in this globalized world — a world of global problems and global opportunities. Greece very much agrees with the words of Louis Michel, speaking in his capacity as President of the European Union, in support of the International Criminal Court and the continued reform of the United Nations.

Today in our search for justice on a global scale, our challenge is to seek moral clarity. We must be able to unite around what is right. The words "freedom", "democracy", "human and minority rights", "equality", "peaceful resolution of conflict", "solidarity", "inclusion", "open society", "multiculturalism", "tolerance" and "biodiversity" must all become the core of our common values. Yet there are different interpretations and different practices in our world concerning these concepts. In our search for a common moral code we must not allow a clash of cultures. We must seek a dialogue of cultures, and from this dialogue of nations, cultures and religions, a common moral code and order can and will emerge. The Charter of the United Nations embodies these values. Our

challenge today is collectively to give practical meaning to them. I should like to mention an important step in recognizing and respecting the dignity and diversity of our cultures in the world. Greece has tabled a resolution on the return of cultural property.

Greece has always stood at a crossroads of cultures. Our best moments have been when we used that richness to learn. Today we are doing so again. Greece is a member of the European Union and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, yet its roots in the East enrich us in equal measure. We are proud to be European and Balkan and Mediterranean. We once were a nation of emigrants and our diaspora has linked us to all corners of the earth. Today we are a country that welcomes immigrants. They make up more than 10 per cent of our population.

Ours is an open, multicultural society in the truest sense of the word. We see and we understand the world through many eyes. We understand that there are different truths and different histories. Yet we approach our traditions not as a wall that isolates us from each other, but as depositories of knowledge and sources of understanding and communication between cultures. We believe that our histories cannot enslave us, they must become our way of learning for the future.

This commitment to dialogue is also a commitment to reach specific, practical results that will enhance our region's ability and the world community's capacity to establish well-respected values and principles in dealing with world problems such as terrorism. But in our fight against terrorism we must uphold these principles, as they differentiate us from those who use violence as their means. We must also heed what the Secretary-General in his address stressed. The problems we all shared prior to 11 September have not disappeared. However, I am encouraged to report that we have made significant strides in our own region of South-Eastern Europe. We did so by committing ourselves to serve these values: human and minority rights, democratic institutions, good-neighbourly relations and the inviolability of borders. We remain committed to the principle that should differences and disagreements emerge, we will seek to resolve them peacefully with respect to international law. We have managed to establish the framework of common values, one that will help us to cooperate to solve our problems. Emerging from a state of despair, the Balkans today represents a ray of hope for all regions in conflict.

Of course there is much to do. Let me list the priorities. We must turn provisional peace into permanent peace. We can do so by resolving outstanding bilateral issues. We must turn new-found democracies into permanent and active democracies. We can do so by building civic capacity and strong transparent institutions that will guarantee the rule of law. We must contain and eradicate organized crime, a poison that runs through new-found democracies and is often linked to terrorist networks. We must turn opportunistic capital investment into entrepreneurial initiatives and permanent business propositions that provide youth with the prospect of a better and more secure future. We must turn segregated communities into multicultural societies, and we can do so by investing in education. Greece has committed resources, and of course its political will, to the above. We cannot stop now. As a world community we must continue and we must strengthen our investment in people and in financial resources until our work is complete.

Two years ago I stood before you here with my Turkish colleague Ismail Cem, expressing the hope for a new beginning in our relations, relations which history seems to have frozen into constant rivalry and conflict. Today I need not express only hope; I can report that we have made significant progress. I have just come from a meeting with my Turkish counterpart where we signed a series of new agreements. Our meetings have become frequent and regular. We work together. We learn together. We help each other out in times of difficulty and crisis. We have discovered the importance of being good neighbours. We have started to develop a common architecture of trust. The products of our efforts are significant. We are constantly adding confidence-building measures to assure peace in the Aegean.

We have made a commitment to jointly become parties to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and we have taken steps to cooperate against natural disasters. We are cooperating in the fight against crime, drug trafficking, illegal migration and terrorism. We are cooperating in tourism. Our trade has doubled. Energy and agriculture have emerged as new fields of further cooperation. Our two societies have taken the initiative to commence and develop common economic, cultural, educational and athletic activities.

These achievements stand as a reminder of the response of our people after the earthquakes, when they sent us a message saying:

> "We have more in common than what separates us; we are all equally vulnerable to pain and suffering; equally capable of sympathy and compassion; equally responsible for the life we offer to the generations that are to follow."

Again this year Greece and Turkey will jointly submit a draft resolution on emergency disaster relief. Our neighbour's path towards the European Union, a path we wholeheartedly support, has set a new framework within which many of our remaining differences can be resolved. Step by step we are building a solid foundation.

Of course our work in the region is far from complete. The architecture of trust we are building in South-Eastern Europe is significantly hindered by the situation in Cyprus, for the question of Cyprus remains unresolved. The island remains divided in a shameful condition. Cyprus is a tragic example of where our shared sense of justice, our code of values, has gone astray. Yet here is a new opportunity. Both the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities could benefit from the island's membership in the European Union. It is a win-win situation. I sincerely believe that every Greek aspires to a solution on Cyprus that will satisfy both communities, a solution imposed by no one party and accepted by all. I believe that that is what every citizen in neighbouring Turkey aspires to as well.

Our constant reference to United Nations resolutions that clearly call for the creation of a bizonal, bicommunal federation cannot be interpreted as a desire for outside imposition — both communities have suffered terribly from outside intervention. On the contrary, this call expresses our deep belief in justice for Cyprus, a sense of justice for both communities. That is what the United Nations framework can guarantee.

I therefore appeal to the Turkish leadership to use that framework for a just solution. Let us not expand the wall that divides the two communities in Cyprus to divide Turkey from Europe. Let us instead break down this last Berlin Wall in Europe and help to create a common future for the citizens of a free Cyprus. To all of us in the region, a region seeking to eliminate division, the prospect of the island's entrance into the united European family should be a source of euphoria, not fear.

If we do share a common moral order, a common understanding of what is right and wrong, then the Middle East peace process had come close to articulating the principles we share. For the good of the people in the region and its stability, that process must continue until a Palestinian State lives peacefully next to a secure Israel. That peace process must begin anew, without preconditions, based on secure initial steps through the implementation of the Mitchell report recommendations. Greece, as both a member of the European Union and a neighbour to the Middle East, will commit its efforts in this crucial situation towards the support of peace, rapprochement and reconciliation.

We also hope that the hardships of the people of Iraq will cease and that the country will be fully integrated into the world community under a leadership that cooperates with the international community and complies with United Nations resolutions. That is also our stand with regard to Afghanistan. We look forward to the day that its Government represents its people and leads them closer to the world community. Here, Greece has already committed substantial resources towards alleviating the humanitarian problem of the Afghanis.

At times when it is easy to succumb to fear we must have the strength to build confidence within and among our societies. We must be able to celebrate humanity in this global village, to go beyond our differences and conflicts. One such occasion is the Olympic Games. They are an ancient tradition that grew out of the need for peace in the ancient world of Hellenism. Today the five rings of the Olympic Games, which represent five continents, are the most recognized symbol on this planet, surpassing any commercial logo. Let us use this global celebration to further strengthen our community of common values. Let us again pledge our commitment to the Olympic Truce which the Secretary-General has so strongly supported and the Millennium Summit has called for. Ismail Cem and I have only recently signed a declaration to this effect. Many ministers of the Balkans, Europe and the Mediterranean have followed. I invite all to become co-signatories.

We see that Truce as a moment in time powerful enough to change the world. During the ceasefire in Bosnia the Olympic Truce helped the Red Cross to

vaccinate hundreds of children. The two Koreas parading under the same flag at the Sydney Games was a powerful moment, witnessed by millions around the world. We see truce as a time to reflect. We see truce as a moment of silence. We see truce as a time to question, to examine what we believe. We see truce as a time to heal our wounds. We can use this pause from violence to celebrate and to rejoice, and we can use it to mourn and to remember. In Salt Lake City we can use it to honour all those unjustly lost. If our global quest for peace is a journey of 1,000 miles, then truce is but the small first step. But imagine how glorious the rest of our journey can be if we celebrate humanity, if we give peace a chance and commit ourselves to that first step.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Kavan (Czech Republic): Let me congratulate Mr. Han Seung-soo on his election to the presidency of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly and wish him every success in this important post. At the same time, I take this opportunity to offer my most sincere congratulations to the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and the entire United Nations on the occasion of the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize award, and to express my gratitude for their determination to defend the ideas of tolerance and mutual respect among nations.

Allow me to extend my own and my country's deepest sympathy to all those who lost loved ones in the horrible terrorist attacks of 11 September. We are deeply moved by the unspeakable tragedy and share the grief of the American people and of all those affected. We perceive the horrifying attack as an attack against the entire civilized international community against the principles of freedom, democracy and peace, the principles upon which the Organization stands. In the aftermath of the attacks of 11 September, the concepts of security, peace and solidarity are acquiring a new and distinct meaning. We recognize the growing interdependency of individual actors on the international scene. The dangers of the new threats and risks that confront our civilization come to the forefront. To conquer them we must not only move energetically against the perpetrators, but also concentrate on the causes that propel them.

At the same time, we are witnessing significant progress leading to the creation of new relationships in the international community. The fact that we were able to create such a wide anti-terrorist coalition so swiftly is very encouraging indeed. It is imperative to strengthen that coalition and enable it not only to fight effectively against terrorism but also to contribute to solving other pressing problems, especially those whose solution will strengthen the struggle against terrorism by reducing tension and promoting justice and stability. The current, unusually wide, international coalition against terrorism presents, I believe, a unique opportunity that we should seize. We should do our utmost to make it effective and operational. We should do our utmost not to let it collapse for reasons that would not stand up to the inevitable future scrutiny of our sons and daughters. We should do our utmost to avoid the trap of allowing the struggle against terrorism, the struggle for peace, justice, stability and coexistence, to be replaced by a clash of civilizations, by the very war that Osama bin Laden is calling for, by a war against Islam. That would be a tragedy.

The international community has at its disposal great potential to address even the most complex problems and crises. It must now reach an agreement on how to approach them and on which tools it will employ to address them. International organizations, and the United Nations specifically, play an irreplaceable role in this process.

The Czech Republic is determined to contribute to the search for effective ways to meet the most pressing challenges of today and to support the international response to terrorism and the actions undertaken so far, especially if the military operation continues to be targeted as accurately as possible against military targets, in this, it is hoped, the final stage of the Taliban's defeat. We view these actions as legitimate and in accordance with the United Nations Charter and United Nations Security Council resolution 1368 (2001). Today more than ever we feel it our duty and obligation to preserve and cherish the uniqueness, as well as the open and universal character, of the United Nations and push more decisively for a strengthening of the role we have entrusted to it.

When we approach these most pressing challenges we must be proactive. For its part, the Czech Republic is determined to carry its share. The Czech Republic has submitted its candidacy for the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General

Assembly of the United Nations. We hold this highly demanding and prestigious position in great respect and are determined to actively participate in the realization of the demanding tasks ahead of us, in the most responsible manner. We are prepared to be attentive to your voices and concerns and to serve the entire membership. We obviously wish to help with the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, including the eradication of extreme poverty and the integration of human rights into every aspect of our work, as we were so eloquently reminded by Secretary-General Kofi Annan a few days ago. We need to inch forward the necessary reform of the United Nations system, strengthen the role of the United Nations General Assembly, help to challenge the marginalization of important continents such as Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia. We need also to help the United Nations to play an effective role in the struggle against international terrorism.

It is clear that accomplishing the objective of finding and bringing to justice the perpetrators of the attacks on the United States is most urgent and topical. However, other phases can be embarked upon at the same time. I agree with the President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, who said at this Assembly that a three-pronged strategy is needed: first, to go after the main culprits, the individual terrorists; secondly, to move decisively against the terrorist organizations; and thirdly — what in my opinion is very important — to address unresolved disputes, which proliferate throughout the world and must be resolved in a helpful and just manner. As I listened carefully to speeches delivered here over the last few days by many leading politicians of the world, I was pleased to confirm my conviction that not only the Czech Republic or the European Union, but also many other countries argue that the fight against terrorism should combine the necessary military operations with, above all, decisive attempts to eradicate the root causes of terrorism. It is therefore necessary to pay far greater attention to conflicts that provide fertile soil for terrorism, because if conflicts remain unresolved for decades, they give rise to feelings of frustration, despair and powerlessness or, as the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran put it, to alienation, extremism and lawlessness. Political solutions of conflicts, many of which are essentially political conflicts, will reduce tensions, promote peace and fairness and, especially, take the wind out of the sails of those who put forward the absurd myth that terrorist actions can bring about anything other than loss of the lives of innocent people and the exacerbation of problems and conflicts.

In our fight against terrorism we need to look for comprehensive solutions and to that end employ all available tools to identify, isolate and destroy the terrorist networks and to combat terrorism as a whole. Our anti-terrorist striving must equally concentrate on combating international organized crime, people smuggling, and drug and arms trafficking. On the financial front it is necessary to cut terrorists off from their resources. A determined focus on preventing money-laundering is a crucial aspect of this effort. Long-term and extensive development assistance aimed at alleviating the most pressing problems of the developing world should be an integral part of these efforts by the international community.

The Czech Republic sees the upholding of the unity and operational readiness of the international coalition combating terrorism as the most imperative task of the day. We, the international community, should not lose this unique opportunity but should take decisive action. The fight against terrorism is a long-term mission and will have an impact on all aspects of our lives. At the national level, the Czech Republic is preparing a national plan for combating terrorism, which is inspired by the Action Plan of the European Union.

In recent weeks the United Nations has shown its renewed resolve to combat international terrorism. We commend the Security Council for its swift action and we support the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001) to combat threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts. The Czech Republic is taking all necessary steps towards the full implementation of the provisions of resolution 1373 (2001), and fully supports the actions of the relevant Counter-Terrorism Committee.

My strong belief in the need for political and diplomatic moves does not in any way suggest that one should negotiate with the terrorists. Just the contrary. Terrorists have to be defeated and brought to justice. There can be no negotiations with the terrorists. The evil of terrorism must be eradicated. The fight against terrorism has a higher priority than ever before, and nobody can stay neutral in this fight. The Czech Republic is proud that it was able to offer both military and humanitarian help to the efforts led by the United

States. The Czech Republic is proud that some of its help was accepted and thus that some of our best soldiers can now actively contribute to these joint endeavours.

As I have said, conflicts can be a breeding ground for terrorism. Terrorism fully exploits unresolved conflicts and profits from their expansion. Therefore our intensified fight against terrorism points unequivocally to the need for the international community to pay far greater attention to conflict resolution in various regions. The United Nations must continue its major role in maintaining peace and security throughout the world by applying an integrated approach of conflict prevention, peacekeeping operations and post-conflict reconstruction.

Recognition of the roots of conflicts and education towards tolerance must be incorporated into our preventive strategies. We fully support the implementation of the comprehensive overhaul of the peacekeeping operations as proposed by the Brahimi report (A/55/305) and other recent reports focusing on this issue. The recent liberation of Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan, and even the most recent fall of Kabul, improve our possibilities of supplying the Afghan people with the humanitarian aid that they so badly need. That must remain at the forefront of our endeavours. We should do our utmost to alleviate the suffering of the innocent Afghan people. I believe there is an extremely important role for the United Nations to play in the consolidation of the post-Taliban Afghan State that is so desperately needed. We should fully support the current efforts of the United Nations, and especially those of Ambassador Brahimi, to form as soon as possible a stable, broad-based Government that will reflect the ethnic diversity of the country. I agree with Foreign Secretary Jack Straw that the one institution in the world that can deliver that better future is the United Nations.

The greatest tensions today undoubtedly prevail in the Middle East. It is regrettable that much of the progress achieved in the past few years seems to have been squandered. But the uphill struggle that faces us there is no reason for doing nothing and letting things get worse and would only mean that more people will suffer and die. The Czech Republic is a traditional and active supporter of the peace process in the Middle East. We cannot reconcile ourselves with the current setbacks. The political violence must be halted. Diplomatic initiatives aimed at bringing the parties back to the negotiating table must be fully supported. The Czech Republic fully supports the right of the Palestinians to their own viable and independent State. Nevertheless, its final shape should be the result of bilateral Palestinian-Israeli negotiations with the full backing of the international community.

The international community has been encouraged by the change in political leadership in the Balkans, which offers a new opportunity to secure genuine peace and economic reconstruction. The upcoming local parliamentary elections in Kosovo will be an important moment in the stabilization process. I should like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative in Kosovo, Hans Haekkerup, for their work in the region. Our admiration also goes to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Kosovo Force (KFOR).

In Africa, despite some progress, not only poverty and AIDS but also armed conflict remain major challenges to the United Nations and the entire international community. Although the destiny of the continent lies in the hands of the Africans, the international community should strengthen its efforts to assist Africa in its struggle to achieve durable peace and especially to acquire higher levels of development.

The struggle to reduce poverty has to stand at the forefront of our joint endeavours. Debt relief and market access are crucial elements of the economic development of developing countries. The United Nations must continue with its activities to promote sustainable development and continue its programmes aimed at providing basic health care and education, fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and averting the devastation of the environment. A gender perspective should be included in all these efforts. The gap between the rich and poor countries continues to grow and is further exacerbated by the imbalance in the distribution of globalization benefits. The digital divide is just an additional symptom of the growing disparity between the developed and developing countries. The United Nations, in cooperation with national governments, the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the private sector, the non-governmental sphere and civil society, must be prepared to address the challenges of globalization. In short, we should respond to the globalization of capital by the globalization of solidarity and social justice.

We need to create a functioning international legal environment in order to prosecute crimes against humanity. The Czech Republic fully supports the entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, an institution that I believe will be a great asset for the maintenance of international law. The protection of human rights will continue to shape the fate of human society. Human rights are universal and indivisible, and it is in the interests of United Nations Member States to support their Organization in its strenuous effort to secure the protection of human rights in today's globally interconnected world. We must not remain indifferent to manifestations of racism, xenophobia, religious or political persecution, discrimination against minorities, violence against women or the violation of the rights of the child, regardless of where they take place. In this regard allow me to mention the World Conference in Durban, South Africa. However difficult the negotiations have shown themselves to be, they point to the fact that extreme intolerance and terrorism are closely interlinked.

The implementation of United Nations reform is imperative in order to make the work of our Organization more effective. As I said at the beginning of my statement, as a candidate for the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly, I fully support the reaffirmation of the central role of the General Assembly, the revitalization of its work, and improvement of its procedural methods. Equally, the reform of the Security Council, including its enlargement in the categories of both permanent and non-permanent members and limitation of the veto, would enhance the authority of that body. A re-evaluation of the application of the sanctions mechanism must also play an important part in the Council's work. The United Nations, more than any other international forum, is where people of all cultures and religions meet. We come here from various parts of our planet to solve the problems of today's world. Despite our different backgrounds we gather here to approach the problems that face us bound by the universal human values that unite us. The highest of them all is the value of human life. We have been tragically reminded that we need to promote the culture of peace and to build an environment in which the principles of these universally shared values will take root. Now more than ever we must strive to overcome our differences and be guided by our common interests. Let us unite our efforts and ensure that our work during this session of the General Assembly contributes to a better, safer and more just world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now invite His Excellency Mr. Hugo Tolentino Dipp, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, to address the Assembly.

Before listening to His Excellency, allow me to express, I think quite legitimately, the feelings of one and all gathered here. On behalf of all those gathered here at this General Assembly session, on our own personal behalf and on behalf of our Governments, I offer our most sincere condolences at the loss of many of your fellow citizens as well as the nationals of other countries as a way of expressing our solidarity, our appreciation and our deep sympathy for our fellow human beings. With these words, allow me to express our deepest grief and, once again, our deepest solidarity with the people and Government of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Dipp (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I address this General Assembly grief-stricken at the death of 260 people in the tragic aviation accident yesterday in this city of New York. Most of the individuals stricken were, like myself, of Dominican nationality. Our profound appreciation goes to the heads of State and Government, to Ministers and to representatives who have expressed their condolences to the people and Government of the Dominican Republic at this tragedy. I am much obliged to you, Sir.

On behalf of the Government of the Dominican Republic I offer our congratulations to the President on his election to the stewardship of this session of the General Assembly, convinced as we are that he will indeed succeed in guiding this session in the very best interests, and for the good, of the international community. Likewise, we offer our most heartfelt congratulations to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his having been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. That honour, together with that bestowed upon the United Nations, proves and ratifies the confidence and recognition felt for the work being done by the international community represented in this Organization on behalf of all mankind.

Despite the fact that in September this year — on the heels of the events of 11 September in New York and in Washington, D.C. — the United Nations devoted

a number of plenary meetings to the issue of terrorism, it is still today impossible for us to separate this from the other items that we must deal with on the agenda of this session. The significance of these tragic developments is of such magnitude that it is imperative for us, as a matter of conscience, to stop and think in greater depth about their complexity and their repercussions on the history that it is our lot to have to live through, and about the most relevant ways for us to prevent and combat this scourge. That is so because it is plain to see that in the time that has elapsed between September and these days of November, we have managed to go further and into greater depth, gaining new insights about the terrorist phenomenon. We absolutely agree with those who have already spoken that terrorism cannot be justified in any way, and that the excuses some would seek to advance to validate these deeds based on the existence of certain economic, social, cultural or political situations, are unacceptable. However paradoxical it may seem to some, the conviction has also been stressed that, while terrorism is unjustifiable and inexcusable, it is in those very situations where terrorism finds its breeding grounds, where frustrations and lack of prospects can fan hatred and irrationality, where being shut out and having no hope, being shunted to the sidelines and suffering from poverty can incubate and give birth and impetus to twisted feelings of indiscriminate and irrational vengeance.

Faced with the sad reality of the events of 11 September just past, we are absolutely convinced that the direction set for us by the Millennium Summit was the right one, that is, the path of peace and of fellowship among people. At that historic gathering the rationale was analysed and the framework set for action by the international community to promote human rights, security, disarmament, economic development, equality of nations, and the fight against hunger, poverty, disease, exclusion, social, racial and gender prejudice, and the abandonment of children, the disabled and the elderly. There can be no doubt that these are the priority objectives for the prevention of violence and crime, that is to say, for the struggle against wars, against genocide and against terrorism.

The full weight, pain and inhumanity of the provocations of 11 September must not divert us from the goals that we set for ourselves in the Millennium Summit Declaration, nor draw us into any disproportionate violence. When last month we addressed this Assembly we stated that the most prized virtue, indeed the democratic essence of this Organization, that is of the United Nations, is its commitment and determination to uphold respect for human rights. It follows that although we know that terrorism is the antithesis of that virtue, we must not therefore act to confront it while failing to live up to the obligation to protect those very rights. While acting in a legitimate reaction of self-defence, we should not be overcome by a spirit of retaliation but should rather seek to apply international law and justice. That is why the Dominican Republic cannot ignore the political measures that surely will also contribute to preventing and combating terrorism. Thus, we must resolutely support Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), adopted on 28 September, and feel ourselves also bound by earlier resolutions and covenants the United Nations has worked out over time in its fight against terrorism.

In 1945 the United Nations Charter highlighted as its core concern the need to preserve peace. That was only to be expected after a war that had brought death to millions of human beings and had wreaked havoc in the life of many nations. The time that has elapsed has brought us to the conviction that there is no better way to preserve peace than to do all that we possibly can to prevent war. The United Nations is ever more necessary to attain that end, because within it we find the underpinnings for promoting a healthy and creative understanding among nations. Our fidelity to the foundations of the Organization must be backed up by a shared political will leading to actions that prove irrefutably that we believe in and live up to what we say and promise.

The unanimous adoption of the Millennium Declaration, inasmuch as it represented a profound commitment by the vast majority of the world's leaders, amounted to a kind of rebirth and renewal of the United Nations in coming to grips with the problems and challenges confronting us in the twenty-first century. In that Declaration it was decided to do all that we could to establish a just and lasting peace in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and the determination was reaffirmed to support all efforts aimed at ensuring the sovereign equality of States, respect for their territorial integrity and political independence and the right to self-determination of peoples that remain under colonial domination and foreign occupation.

That pledge makes it incumbent upon us to bring our full moral force to bear and to avail ourselves of all possibilities afforded us by the machinery of the Organization to resolve the conflicts that keep a number of States around the globe in a state of war. We have no doubt whatever that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian state must come to an end via compliance with the multiple resolutions towards that end that have emanated from the General Assembly, thus honouring what we agreed upon in that Millennium Declaration.

Moreover, we set for ourselves the purpose of spurring forward reform of the United Nations Charter and respecting the equality of the rights of nations. Ratifying the Millennium Declaration means that there can be no delay in turning the Security Council into a body that would respond to the historic realities of the present world and in establishing a logical set of democratic balances based on those realities. It seems to us fair for the non-permanent members to participate in the Security Council via a rotational system that would give to all the same opportunity. By the same token, the Dominican Republic believes that it is also a matter of equity and historical realism for us to accept the Republic of China on Taiwan as a Member of the United Nations. Geopolitical reasons must not override situations of fact that have been recognized in bringing other States into the United Nations.

In the Millennium Declaration the problem of globalization was addressed with the following words:

> "We recognize that developing countries and countries with economies in transition face special difficulties in responding to this central challenge. Thus, only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable." (*resolution 55/2, para. 5*)

As we speak, a Ministerial Meeting of the countries members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is being held in Doha, Qatar. Most countries with small economies are rightfully calling for the fulfilment of all the agreements of the Uruguay Round. We hope that they will not be saddled with unbearable new burdens, that their calls will be heard and that generous solidarity and cooperation will be shown, as well as understanding of the imbalances, differences and asymmetries in the pace of development when comparing rich countries to poor, small ones.

Among the objectives of the World Trade Organization are respect for human rights, strengthening democracy and preserving the environment. All that will not be possible if the process of globalization is not carried out with a sincere and resolute determination to show understanding and to provide cooperation and technical assistance to help the majority of the nations on this planet to achieve development. How are we to understand the deadlines set by the World Trade Organization for attaining certain economic objectives, in some cases as soon as 2003 and in others 2005, when the Millennium Declaration, aware of the inequalities and difficulties facing most nations, seeks to redress no sooner than 2015 — and only to a certain degree — the poverty of millions upon millions of human beings whose income is less than $1 a day? We hope that at the conferences scheduled by the United Nations, such as the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, light can be shed on these problems in an effective way, yielding equitable measures designed to reduce the inequalities separating peoples one from the other.

Allow me finally to refer to an aspect most intimately tied to respect for and recognition of human rights, something that also coincides with the Millennium Declaration inasmuch as it refers to the demands of women and gender equality. Indeed, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), based in the Dominican Republic, is one of the few United Nations institutions located in a developing country, and the only international institute devoted to research on and training for the advancement of women. The Secretary-General, in his report to the General Assembly presented in the Third Committee on 17 October 2001, said that, notwithstanding the difficulties and uncertainties that INSTRAW has encountered in the last two years it has managed to obtain the minimum resources for fulfilling the mandate assigned to it by the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

He went on to say that inasmuch as the Institute has begun to produce tangible results via the information system and contact networks in creating an awareness of gender issues, perhaps the Assembly would wish to adopt a decision on how Institute would

be able to operate productively and cost-effectively beyond the year 2001.

Let us not let INSTRAW — that noble institution, a pioneer in the advancement of women, particularly of women in developing countries — perish for lack of resources. Let us make a consistent and generous gesture, demonstrating solidarity, so that the General Assembly will ensure the continued existence of this institution beyond this year of 2001, by allocating in the United Nations budget the funds necessary for it to continue to work towards its fruitful humanitarian ends.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to ask subsequent speakers to bear in mind the number of speakers still to make their statements. I remind Members of the fact that 15 minutes has been allotted to each statement to allow us to complete the programme and speakers' list within the time allotted.

I now take deep pleasure in calling on His Excellency Mr. Baboucarr-Blaise Ismaila Jagne, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Gambia.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): On behalf of my delegation, I should like to present our heartfelt condolences to the grieving families following the tragic plane accident yesterday.

Let me at the outset congratulate Mr. Han Seung-soo on his unanimous election to preside over the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly. With his wealth of experience and wisdom we have no doubt that our deliberations will always be crowned with success. He may rest assured that in carrying out the important mandate entrusted to him, he will not find the cooperation of the Gambian delegation wanting. On behalf of my delegation I should also like to pay a special tribute to his predecessor for a job well done.

As for our indefatigable Secretary-General, I add my voice to those of previous speakers in congratulating him, and the United Nations, on winning the Nobel Peace Prize. In addition to that, my delegation commends him for his effective and inspiring leadership, in turning the United Nations around in such a way that much of the hope that was lost has since been restored. Mr. Secretary-General, you deserve our respect and admiration.

The circumstances in which we are meeting this time are far different from previous sessions for reasons well known to all of us. The terrorist attacks on New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania on 11 September took the whole world by surprise because of their cataclysmic proportions. Nothing can ever justify such barbaric acts. Unfortunately, like so many countries present here today, we too were bereaved following the attack on the World Trade Center. I should like at this juncture to express profound gratitude to President George W. Bush for his kind remarks. The Government and people of the Gambia, as well as the families concerned, are deeply moved by the President's thoughtfulness. All of this shows that terrorism has no boundaries and, worse still, it has no respect for the sanctity of life. It is incumbent upon all of us therefore not to offer sanctuary to any terrorists or their sponsors.

In the Gambia, His Excellency the President Alhaji Dr. Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, declared three days of national mourning and requested all mosques and churches to pray for the deceased in solidarity with the friendly people of the United States and their Government. While we continue to pray and mourn, individually and collectively, we in the Gambia subscribe unreservedly to Security Council resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001), of 12 and 28 September 2001, respectively. Similarly, we welcome the adoption of the Dakar Declaration on terrorism by the Conference of African Heads of State and Government, held in Dakar, Senegal, on 17 October 2001.

Having said that, I would, however, hasten to point out that it is one thing to adopt resolutions and declarations but it is quite another to implement them fully. It goes without saying that the fight against international terrorism is neither easy nor the business of a select group of countries alone. Certainly not. This international scourge can only be dealt with effectively through concerted international effort. However, it will serve no useful purpose to request Member States to report on measures taken in the fight against terrorism when the requisite means to do so are not available. This will be a long and difficult engagement, but at the same time it is not an impossible task. In the process, no country should be excluded. Consequently, as a first step, the Security Council should inquire of Member States what they need, at the national level, to equip them in the fight against terrorism, especially in terms of training and logistics. In our view, that is the priority

of priorities, because no category of countries can be considered safe unless and until all categories of countries are seen to be safe.

Let me mention *en passant* one very important point. The Gambia, where I come from, is predominantly Muslim, but we do not at all subscribe to the misleading concept that the struggle against terrorism is one between Islam and Christianity. For that reason we in the Gambia are committed to signing and ratifying all the relevant United Nations conventions against terrorism.

Allow me now to dwell a little on some domestic issues. As was widely reported all over the world, the presidential elections that were held in the Gambia on 18 October 2001 received the unanimous endorsement of the entire international community as free, fair and transparent. All international observers present in the country expressed the same views. The 1996 elections were also free, fair and transparent, but we were given a mere pass. In the 2001 elections we passed with flying colours. As of right, therefore, we expect our principal partners in development, who were still sceptical in 1996, now to show the way forward by embracing the Government and people of the Gambia in a new spirit of solidarity geared towards a fresh and reinvigorated partnership. We have kept our part of the bargain as a nation. We have delivered what was expected of us — in fact, we did more and better than expected. What happened immediately after the election results were announced is ample demonstration of political maturity. Let me give a graphic illustration of what I am talking about by borrowing a paragraph or two from His Excellency President Jammeh's victory statement.

> "Fellow Gambians, [...] I would want to enjoin you all after the celebrations to put the campaign and all the euphoria and the differences and misunderstandings of politics behind us and come together as one people to work with my Government, supporters and non-supporters alike, to further develop this country."

President Jammeh then went on to thank the principal leaders of the opposition for their courage and maturity displayed in extending their congratulations to him in a telephone conversation. The President then said:

> "The gesture was indeed most welcome and I would want to restate my expectation that with the elections now behind us, we would put our differences of political ideology aside and work together as members of the same family to pursue the development agenda we in this country have set for ourselves, in the best interest of our beloved people."

That indeed was the icing on the cake. It can now be proclaimed without any fear of contradiction that the Gambia, despite all the odds, is consolidating its position among the leading democracies in Africa, and indeed in the whole world.

Mr. Ould Deddach (Mauritania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Elsewhere on the African continent, while we cannot claim that the same pattern of free and fair elections and the rule of law prevail, we can note with satisfaction that the signs are encouraging, although a lot more remains to be done. In neighbouring Sierra Leone we commend the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) for what has been achieved so far. As elections are fast approaching it becomes even more urgent to accelerate the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

The importance of a regional approach to conflict resolution cannot be overemphasized. We will have to sound our own trumpet by commending the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the preponderant role that it has played in the quest for a lasting solution to the problems in the Mano River area. With regard to another neighbouring country, Guinea-Bissau, the Gambia, in its capacity as coordinator of the Group of Friends of Guinea-Bissau, would like to launch an appeal to the donor community to cooperate closely with the Group with a view to convening the long overdue round-table donors' conference. As stated in the Fall report following a mission to West Africa some time ago, certain countries in transition, such as Guinea-Bissau, need special and urgent attention. I am referring to the important report by Assistant Secretary-General Ibrahima Fall. We are not done with that report yet, for it raises such serious issues as the regional approach to conflict resolution.

We are also following very closely the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is gratifying to note that the Security Council adopted resolution 1376 (2001) by which it gave the green light for the launching of phase III of the deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). My delegation also encourages the parties concerned to pursue the inter-Congolese dialogue with renewed vigour and to cooperate with the Facilitator. We are saddened, however, by the illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is obviously a direct link between such practices and the prolongation of the conflict. Still, in the Great Lakes region, we pay a special tribute to former President Mandela for his laudable efforts to bring peace to Burundi. Concerning the situation in Angola, my delegation continues to believe that UNITA's ability to wage war must be further reduced through tighter sanctions. In this context we note with satisfaction the extension of the mandate of the Monitoring Mechanism.

Turning to other parts of the continent, my delegation welcomes the decision of the Security Council to terminate the sanctions that were imposed on the Sudan. We are also calling on the Council to make a bold move and lift the sanctions imposed on Libya. The international community demanded that the Libyan authorities hand over the Lockerbie suspects for trial in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. The international community must now honour its obligations and stop moving the goal-posts.

Outside Africa we also continue to express concern about a number of conflict situations. Seemingly, the most intractable of the lot is the situation in the Middle East, and, notably, the Palestinian problem. There can be no lasting peace in the Middle East without resolving the Palestinian question. We in the Gambia have always held the view that, while recognizing the right of Israel to exist within secure borders, we also believe that the relevant United Nations resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict should be implemented, culminating in the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

In the situation between Kuwait and Iraq, we in the Gambia have always maintained that the international community should, as a matter of urgency, find ways of alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people. But at the same time, the Iraqi leadership must be accountable for the Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons. The families of the prisoners of war and missing persons have also been suffering for too long and, therefore, we call upon the Iraqi Government to respect and comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions in order to achieve peace and stability in the Gulf region.

It is an irony that long after the end of the cold war, the situation in the Korean peninsula remains basically the same. We in the Gambia were, however, very much encouraged by the visit to North Korea of President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea in June last year. It is only through dialogue and the exchange of such high-level visits that the peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula will be achieved.

Similarly, it is our fervent hope that one day the Republic of China on Taiwan and the People's Republic of China will unite but, as the saying goes, let us put first things first. As clearly stated by my delegation during the meeting of the General Committee, the Government of the Gambia would like to reiterate that the exceptional situation of the Republic of China on Taiwan needs to be reconsidered by this body. Only a few days ago, the Republic of China on Taiwan was admitted to the World Trade Organization (WTO). That is no mean achievement and, therefore, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government and the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan. We in the Gambia have no doubt that they will make constructive contributions to the work of the WTO. It will be recalled that the Republic of China on Taiwan is now the world's seventeenth largest economy in terms of gross national product (GNP) and the fifteenth most important trading nation. Considering that the Republic of China on Taiwan possesses the world's third largest foreign reserves, in addition to its strategic position as the sixteenth largest foreign direct investor, it does not make much sense to continue to exclude it from the United Nations. Politics aside, the Republic of China on Taiwan has a lot to offer the international community. For instance, in the crucial area of information and communication technologies (ICT), the real revolution of our times, the Republic of China on Taiwan is in the vanguard. We all know that the issue of ICT is among the top priorities of the United Nations and we therefore look forward to the special event on Tuesday, 20 November, when the Secretary-General will launch the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force. How will we be able to benefit from the expertise of the Republic of China on Taiwan when it is excluded from the work of the United Nations?

The Republic of China on Taiwan is active in other important areas as well, especially development cooperation, by providing experts and through international financial institutions, and, likewise, in the humanitarian field by providing disaster relief to countries in need. The case of the Republic of China on Taiwan is unique. It is exceptional and should be treated as such, quite apart from observing the principle of universality.

Another country which has much to offer the international community is Cuba, ranging from medicine to sports. After more than three decades, the sanctions imposed on Cuba should now be lifted. These sanctions can no longer be justified; in fact, they are counterproductive.

Prior to the tragic events of 11 September, we had already identified a number of areas for increased international cooperation within the framework of the Millennium Declaration. Foremost among these is the eradication of poverty. It is made a priority of priorities in the Millennium Declaration, if not *the* priority. In the World Development Report 2000-2001 entitled "Attacking poverty", the President of the World Bank in his foreword stated that "Poverty amid plenty is the world's greatest challenge." We are also of the view that poverty constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security, knowing that 1.2 billion people live on less than $1 a day. That is why our leaders undertook to cut by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by the year 2015. Of the 1.2 billion who live on less than $1 a day, 300 million are in Africa. Under these circumstances the New African Initiative is indeed a timely response. We only hope that unlike previous blueprints for Africa's socio-economic development, the New Initiative will not be left to gather dust. It would appear for the first time, that we, the Africans, are in the driver's seat. That is a clear demonstration of ownership and commitment. Our principal partners in development should also complement our efforts by providing the necessary resources as a matter of urgency. The Economic Commission for Africa should work closely with the various regional economic groupings to ensure proper and effective coordination. We are confident that the momentum generated by the adoption of the New African Initiative will be intensified with the convening of the International Conference on Financing for Development at the summit level in Monterrey, Mexico, next year. That Conference will provide a unique opportunity for the international community to translate into reality the global solidarity spelled out in the Millennium Declaration, especially in such vital areas as official development assistance (ODA), foreign direct investment (FDI) and debt reduction, or outright cancellation in some cases, and market access — to mention only a few.

Similarly, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10), to be held in South Africa next year, will also provide a golden opportunity for stocktaking, notably for a comprehensive review of the implementation of Agenda 21.

All efforts geared towards the eradication of poverty would be incomplete without addressing the issue of food security. My delegation therefore looks forward to the convening of the World Food Summit in June next year. A related issue is health. We in West Africa, particularly we in the Gambia, would like to eradicate malaria as a matter of urgency and, as a first step, our leaders have adopted the Rollback Malaria Programme. We will need the support and solidarity of the entire international community in this endeavour, especially within the context of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization.

With special reference to the least developed countries, it will be recalled that the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held recently, adopted yet another Programme of Action for the decade 2001-2010 aimed essentially at the eradication of poverty. We hope that the rest of the donor community will support that Programme fully by making available the resources necessary for its implementation. In any poverty eradication programme, the most vulnerable groups, that is, women and children, should be given special attention. That is why the Government of the Gambia remains committed to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including the further actions and initiatives that emanated from the Beijing+5 Conference held last June. The same applies to the Nairobi forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women and all other initiatives that promote the advancement of women and the girl child. In fact, His Excellency President Yahya Jammeh has now decided that all girls in the Gambia from grades 1 to 12, in virtually all parts of the country, will no longer pay school fees.

Finally, experience has shown that our collective security can only be guaranteed if and when all

members of the comity of nations are equally guaranteed freedom from want and freedom from fear. That can be achieved only through genuine international solidarity. The tendency to look the other way when another needs a helping hand should be a thing of the past. Each time in our history when we are faced with major difficulties, we suddenly realize how much we need one another. We close our ranks and take up the challenges together. We are again at a crossroads. That is why we are all here to renew faith in multilateralism. There is no alternative to the United Nations. We are now strengthened in our conviction that our Organization is nowhere near being a "sunset" Organization. It is a "sunrise" Organization. But it should shine even brighter once the Security Council is reformed to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. Unless that is done, the Security Council runs the serious risk of becoming irrelevant because it is anchored in the past. We do not want that to happen. It is too vital an organ to be sidelined, but it must adapt and adjust. It is time to move on. Let us be forward-looking. Whatever the outcome may be, Africa must be adequately represented.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. János Martonyi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary.

Mr. Martonyi (Hungary) (*spoke in French*): First, may I congratulate Mr. Han Seung-soo on his election to preside over the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I assure him that he has the Hungarian delegation's full support in the effective fulfilment of his tasks and high responsibility. At the same time, I wish to thank Mr. Harri Holkeri for the much appreciated work that he carried out in his capacity as President of the preceding session of the General Assembly.

Sixty-three days have elapsed since 11 September. More than 80 nations are in mourning today, mourning the absurd deaths of their compatriots, men and women from all over the world and representing different and various traditions, cultures, beliefs and ethnic origins. Approximately 6,000 people perished as a result of heinous terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, and we remember the victims in our prayers and extend our deep sympathy and compassion to their families and friends.

These attacks were committed against the entire civilized world and against fundamental human values. The Security Council and the General Assembly very quickly took firm and clear measures in order to defend the universal interests of the international community. To this end, an effective global coalition was created in which Hungary, side by side with many other countries, is proudly participating. Those who perpetrated and supported these terrorist attacks are trying to depict their acts, as well as the reaction of legitimate self-defence to those acts, as a war of religion. Clearly it is nothing of the sort. There can be no justification for these acts, nor for any other terrorist activities anywhere else. In fact, international terrorism pursues political objectives and is trying to undermine our multi-ethnic and multi-concessional world, to exacerbate regional conflict, to pit various cultures one against another and to impose on us by force its own order of hatred and fanaticism. The nature of the challenge with which we are confronted is eminently strategic: first, because it calls into question the raison d'être and endangers the very existence of our civilization; secondly, because the terrorist network, which is organizing against us, has managed to develop global capacities; and, lastly, because in the war that is declared against us, terrorism abides by no legal order and follows no rules.

We can welcome the fact that, on the basis of a convergence of interests, cooperation among States has acquired, in the two months following the terrible event, a dimension that is very promising and entirely new. But major combat against international terrorism will certainly not be short. Of course the military action launched against the Taliban regime and the terrorist Al Qaeda organization represent an important element, but not the only one, within the framework of international action. Within this struggle, the tasks that we have to carry out are complex and multifaceted. We have to do our utmost in the political, diplomatic, educational, legal, and also financial, humanitarian, economic and social areas to make sure that we, in the final analysis, emerge victorious from this struggle. We must recognize that in this struggle we have to redouble our efforts to promote the rule of law, to reject extremism, intolerance, discrimination and nationalistic tendencies and to intensify the global work that has to be accomplished in order to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development. The fight against terrorism is part and parcel of the general

framework of this global endeavour within which we are trying to build a better world.

The terrorist attacks against the United States will probably be remembered as a turning point in our history, and also an opening to a new era. What is certain is that from now on humanity will not be able to continue in the same way as before. Governments have to shoulder major responsibility vis-à-vis this challenge, which now touches directly upon our everyday existence. The international community managed to find the most appropriate response by bringing together a coalition unprecedented in inter-State relations, the historic importance of which will certainly go far beyond our own era. Hungary stands ready, within the limit of its capacity, to take an active part in that coalition.

In the present situation, the United Nations is called upon to play a role of primary importance, to strengthen the effectiveness of international action. Through the development of 12 anti-terrorist conventions, the United Nations has already contributed very significantly towards the development of a common framework of international law in the fight against terrorism. Through the adoption of other conventions, which are now being prepared, the legal framework will become even more comprehensive and general. However, in order to do that, we must make new efforts and, given the importance of what is at stake, and the fact that we have common goals, the groups of countries concerned should display a greater degree of flexibility. The United Nations should be able fully to play its role of enhancing the practical implementation of international anti-terrorist cooperation.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks, a series of specific measures were implemented by my country's Government. At the international level we have strengthened our cooperation, both political and legal, in the anti-terrorist area with our allies at NATO and our partners within the European Union (EU). We decided also to implement Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), and we will forward to the Committee that was established under the terms of that resolution a detailed report on the national measures undertaken by Hungary to fight terrorism. I should like to recall at this stage that Hungary is a party to most of the international, multilateral conventions against terrorism.

As regards the two most recently passed United Nations conventions in this area, let me state that my country has just deposited today with the Secretary-General the instrument of ratification for the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings. I should like to announce that Hungary will sign the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism in the upcoming weeks. We are determined to become a party to that Convention as quickly as possible, so as to complement the Hungarian participation in international conventions that are universal in nature and deal with the fight against terrorism. Furthermore, my Government recently submitted to Parliament a draft law to strengthen national regulations in the areas of money-laundering and fighting terrorism.

Hungary attaches very special importance to the success of the international humanitarian action in Afghanistan. Through the two Hungarian humanitarian organizations, which traditionally have played a role in the region, my Government has started to forward humanitarian assistance to the refugees and the Afghan population. Such assistance consists of foodstuffs and blankets for about 15,000 people.

My Government is very deeply concerned at the danger represented by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Our commitment in favour of multilateral control over such weapons remains unchanged and we participate in international efforts aimed at limiting and eliminating weapons of mass destruction. The tragic events of 11 September and the recent anthrax-related incidents make us realize the possible dramatic consequences of the absence of a reaction by the community of nations to the challenge presented by weapons of mass destruction, including biological weapons. We think that the strengthening of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction will enable the international community to act even more effectively against the intent to use biological agents for military objectives. The ad hoc group asked to work out measures for implementation managed to make notable progress in the almost seven years of its history, and is very near agreement. We regret that it could not finalize its work before the date of the Fifth Review Conference of the Convention. It is important that the Conference should leave aside the divergence of views

with regard to the approach to the modalities of the long-term strengthening of the Convention, and that instead it should underscore the commitment undertaken by Member States to promote the integrity of the system of the prohibition of biological weapons.

In its capacity as Chair of the Fifth Review Conference, Hungary would like to do its utmost in order to justify the hopes expressed by Member States and public opinion that specific results will emerge from the Conference. We would like actively to contribute to making sure that efforts aimed at strengthening the system of prohibition of biological weapons will also continue without interruption after the Conference.

The Statute of the International Criminal Court is a political and legal document of capital importance. It translates into fact the historic aspiration we have had that those who commit the crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity will not be allowed in future to act with impunity. Therefore, we warmly welcome the ratification of the Rome Statute by a rapidly growing number of countries, to date numbering more than 40. Within this context I wish to announce here that the Hungarian Parliament, by a resolution that was adopted almost unanimously, ratified the Statute on 6 November. The deposition of the instrument of ratification will take place in the course of this month of November.

Hungary is working actively so as to ensure that the Court, this very important institution of our era, can start working in the near future. We should also make efforts to ensure that it will be universally accepted as soon as possible because only in that way will it be able to be successful in its work and effective in the area of maintaining peace and international security and effectively protecting international humanitarian law and human rights.

Our world has changed and we all have to change with it. Unfortunately, when I say that I am not saying that earlier challenges have disappeared but rather that, in addition to the difficulties we already have, we are facing a new crisis that compels us to think strategically and at the same time be very resolute in our action. The work that we have to carry out is therefore wider and broader and the only choice we have is to act on the basis of our human values in the interests of our civilization and future security. The United Nations is part and parcel of that endeavour. The Millennium Declaration speaks of it with great eloquence and the events of 11 September only strengthen the message contained therein by underscoring the crucial nature of the times we live in, a crossroads between two centuries and two millennia.

We are asked to provide answers to the global questions that haunt us and that have been continuously plaguing this world. The success or failure of our efforts to provide such answers will, without any doubt, affect the quality of life of the whole of the twenty-first century. It is in this spirit that my delegation wishes to provide its contribution to the success of the deliberations, held under the very special circumstances of the present session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ernst Walch, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Walch (Liechtenstein): Let me first join previous speakers in expressing our heartfelt sympathies to the host country and to the bereaved families for the loss of their loved ones in yesterday's disaster.

Ever since 11 September, the fight against terrorism in all its forms has rightfully been at the top of the agenda of the United Nations and of other international organizations. On behalf of the Government of Liechtenstein, I wish to pledge our full support for international cooperation to combat terrorism. A quick understanding has emerged that multilateralism and international cooperation are the only ways to successfully tackle the challenges we are facing. Once again, the world has looked to the United Nations for leadership in our common fight, and once again the United Nations has delivered. We wish to pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He has navigated this Organization in a most clever, capable and visionary manner through turbulent times and assiduously enhanced its standing in the international arena. Right before the beginning of his second term as Secretary-General the United Nations is a stronger and more credible organization than ever. I wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, and indeed the entire Organization he heads, on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. No one could be better placed to be a voice of international legitimacy and to provide leadership during the times ahead — and this is a moment when leadership is most needed.

Both the General Assembly and the Security Council have reacted with resolve and determination to the attacks of 11 September. The Council took a bold step in adopting its ground-breaking resolution 1373 (2001). We are indeed facing a new type of crisis and the Security Council has designed a new type of response. The delegation of Liechtenstein looks forward to working closely with the Counter-Terrorism Committee to fully implement the provisions of that resolution. Given the novelty of the task, we appreciate the difficulties and enormous workload the Committee is facing. We also express our support for the transparent manner and the spirit of cooperation and dialogue which the Committee has displayed thus far in carrying out its work. Benchmarking and best practices are of the utmost importance in this context. High standards of enforcement have to be developed and to be applied uniformly to all actors, be they Governments, banks, intermediaries, fiduciaries or attorneys. We are committed to implementing resolution 1373 (2001) as a whole, but will place particular emphasis on its central aspects relating to the financing of terrorism. We have all the necessary instruments in place to make our contribution to suppress and prevent the financing of terrorism. Consequently, I signed on behalf of Liechtenstein the Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism on 2 October this year. Our common effort can only be successful if it is focused on our true goal of stopping financial flows to terrorists and their organizations. We must not, however, venture into other areas of international financing under the guise of fighting terrorism. In this context I wish to state very clearly that bank secrecy as practised in Liechtenstein never has provided and never will provide protection to terrorists or their financial transactions.

If the fight against terrorism is to be a genuinely common effort, it must include all of us. The General Assembly, as the only all-inclusive organ of the United Nations, must therefore play a significant role in our efforts. We trust that the General Assembly will assert its rightful place as the law-making body of the United Nations by adopting a comprehensive convention against terrorism to fill the gaps in the existing framework of international law dealing with specific aspects of terrorism.

The fight against terrorism is multifaceted and the role of the United Nations must also cover a wide range of topics, including what is often referred to as the root causes of terrorism. Indeed, isolating the extremists, exposing the perversity of their agenda, and thus preventing more misguided and disenfranchised people from joining a cause of insanity, is the only way our fight will be successful in the long term. Poverty, social exclusion and marginalization, and the lack of basic education are key areas we must address. These are, of course, by no means new topics on the agenda of the United Nations, but we need to do more and we need to do better. Informed and educated policy changes are not concessions to the evil of terrorism. Such thinking would lead to paralysis and inaction. It is of crucial importance that the spirit of international cooperation, rather than being selective and short-lived, should prevail in our work on these essential issues.

The United Nations is further challenged on the complex relationship between terrorism and human rights. The promotion and protection of human rights must not fall victim to the fight against terrorism. Human rights are not a luxury that we can afford during good times and dispense with in times of crisis. Rather, they are the foundation upon which all our activities must be based. Curtailing the existing human rights standards in the name of the fight against terrorism would mean giving up our most fundamental values — the very values that those who commit terrorist attacks are out to destroy. This we must not allow to happen. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was concluded on 8 September. I had the honour to attend that event in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which served as the regional preparatory body for the Conference. After a most difficult and complex process, the Conference was brought to a successful end with probably the best achievable outcome — the resolution of issues of both the past and the present, and a global anti-discrimination agenda within which we all can work.

The difficulties of the Durban Conference are reflected in the still ongoing debate on remaining technical, but important, details. The necessary political will should be mustered as soon as possible so that the message from Durban can reach people worldwide. The events of 11 September have given additional significance to this message, since racism and intolerance can be both cause and consequence of terrorism. One of our most difficult new challenges in our fight against racism is to prevent discrimination

against people because of their affiliation with certain ethnic groups.

There are those who interpret the events of 11 September as a fulfilment of a predicted clash of civilizations. They are wrong. Those who committed the attacks do not represent a civilization or religion; they believe only in terror, violence and destruction. They are just criminals. Their acts were not an attack on a civilization; they were an attack on, and a crime against, humanity. But, of course, nothing would serve their intentions better than a clash of civilizations. The United Nations is therefore challenged to prevent such a clash. The International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations serves as a useful reminder of what the United Nations has always stood for.

Terrorism cannot be fought only with military measures and international judicial cooperation. Only by going beyond these obvious measures can we be successful in the long term. We must change the collective conscience and awareness of all societies and teach our children the futility and the dangers of resorting to violence as a means of dealing with conflicts. Terrorists utilize the most extreme forms of violence. Therefore, they must be effectively excluded from society. They must be outlawed. It must be unacceptable for terrorists to establish themselves as political players by resorting to violence and by indiscriminately attacking civilians.

This unified stance against terrorism must, in turn, be accompanied by our willingness to engage in a peaceful dialogue with those who advocate legitimate political causes, difficult as that may seem. Only by ensuring that communities and entities are not oppressed, and that they are given room to voice their concerns, can we eventually eradicate terrorism. In this context it is important that the international community develop mechanisms that allow for such a dialogue to take place, based on an agreed framework and existing standards of international law. We must not accept terrorism as a fact of life, but believe in our collective ability to eradicate it. That goal may seem distant or even unrealistic, but so did the goal of eradicating slavery in the nineteenth century and fascism in the twentieth century. It is now up to all of us to free ourselves from terrorism, the scourge of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Thérence Sinunguruza, Minister for External Relations and Cooperation of Burundi.

Mr. Sinunguruza (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): It is for me a signal honour to take the floor today before the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. On behalf of my delegation, I wish at the outset to express my sincere congratulations to Mr. Han Seung-soo of the Republic of Korea on his well-deserved election to the presidency of this body of the United Nations. We believe that his vast experience, his dynamism and his competence guarantee the success of our work at this session. He can count on my delegation to be fully available to him. We will spare no effort to facilitate his work so that his noble mission can be carried out to the fullest.

Allow me next to pay sincere tribute to Mr. Harri Holkeri for the way he acquitted himself in his term of office leading the work at our last session. We all appreciated his many talents as a statesman and seasoned diplomat, which in large measure contributed to bringing the work of that session to a successful conclusion.

I should like, finally, to avail myself of this felicitous opportunity to convey the greetings of the Burundian people to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and to express to him once again my heartfelt congratulations on his unanimous re-election to the helm of the Organization for a second term of office. At the same time, I address to him my warmest congratulations on the Nobel Peace Prize just awarded to him and to the United Nations itself. This token of renewed confidence is a striking expression of recognition of the United Nations family's tireless efforts in every corner of the world for the cause of peace and development. My Government is particularly obliged to the Secretary-General for his personal commitment to helping the people of Burundi emerge from crisis so that through the ongoing peace process they can resume the path of peace, reconciliation and development.

All of us were shocked and horrified by the murderous attacks perpetrated here in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania on 11 September 2001. My Government firmly condemned those odious terrorist acts, characterized by indescribable barbarity. The President of the Republic of Burundi, Mr. Pierre Buyoya, dispatched a message of condolence to

President George W. Bush immediately after the tragic events had been reported.

The events of 11 September 2001 mark a new global challenge for the United Nations in its resolute fight against terrorism and for maintaining international peace and security. The Government of the Republic of Burundi fully subscribes to the relevant resolutions of the United Nations on the fight against terrorism. Committed to the ideals of peace and security the world over, it intends to make its own contribution to building a world from which international terrorism will be banished. Towards that end, Burundi endorses the various international conventions against international terrorism. It has already ratified three of them, and this morning we signed the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, adopted in 1999. The necessary steps will be taken to sign and ratify the remaining conventions. Burundi hails the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 1373 (2001) and stands committed to examining in depth its scope of application on our own national territory.

In light of the plethora of sophisticated juridical provisions — extant for nearly 30 years now — to fight against this scourge, a profound awareness and far more sustained collective action today is imperative. The Government of Burundi agrees with the content of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which emphasizes:

> "... the need to enhance coordination of efforts on national, subregional, regional and international levels in order to strengthen a global response to this serious challenge and threat to international security" (*S/RES/1373 (2001), op. para. 4*).

That global response obviously, and as a matter of priority, is an imperative for us, the Members of this institution, the United Nations, on which the Charter explicitly confers the role of maintaining international peace and security.

As to the situation in my own country, Burundi, the present session is being held at a time when the peace process has just completed a particularly decisive phase. Indeed the Arusha Peace Accord, which Burundi signed on 28 August 2000, has begun to be resolutely implemented. May I be allowed to bring to the attention of the distinguished representatives gathered here certain major developments worthy of being emphasized. After a number of consultations held among the signatories to the Peace Agreement, and after the Facilitation and Regional Initiative, the matter of the transitional leadership for the next three years has been settled. On 1 November 2001, the solemn inauguration of the President and Vice-President of the Republic and the transitional Government was held.

I wish to make a point of expressing the very sincere thanks of the Government and people of Burundi to the heads of State and other eminent personalities that elevated those ceremonies by their presence.

At this important stage in the peace process, I should like to take care of a pleasant duty, namely that of paying tribute first to the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, who was the first to play a mediator's role in the inter-Burundian peace process in an extremely delicate setting. Secondly, I wish to make it a point solemnly to hail the courage, vision, perseverance and tact that His Excellency the former President Nelson Mandela displayed throughout the inter-Burundian negotiations so as to help the Burundian people regain the path to peace, reconciliation and democracy. From this lofty tribune I wish to express to him our feelings of profound gratitude. We feel the same sentiments of sincere appreciation to the United Nations and all countries and personalities that have worked from near or afar to see to the signing of the Peace Accord, people who continue to invest of themselves in order to see the Agreement fully implemented. It is thanks to all these pooled efforts that some glimmer of hope is perceptible in the Burundian political skies.

The new Government has set itself as a priority task halting the war, rehabilitating victims and restoring the country in socio-economic terms. Notwithstanding, however, our firm determination to move forward, the programme continues to encounter enormous challenges, challenges such as the persistence of war and the exacerbation of poverty. With regard to the war, we must deplore the fact that armed groups continue to sow grief and desolation in various parts of the country, pursuing a nameless war, a war that is killing innocents in their homes, in the camps for displaced persons and along the roads, a war that favours pillaging and rape and that has destroyed social and economic infrastructures built at great cost. We denounce and condemn in the strongest terms this new type of violence, namely the seizing of school

children by rebel elements to press-gang them into guerrilla forces or to have them do their dirty deeds.

In this context the priority of all priorities for my country thus remains the quest for a ceasefire, which would make it possible to begin the major reforms envisaged during the transitional period. Notwithstanding numerous initiatives directed by our Government towards the armed groups — the Conseil national pour la défense de démocratie-Forces pour la défense de démocratie (CNDD-FDD), and the Forces nationales de la libération (FNL) — inviting them to subscribe to the peace process and join in negotiations, as yet there is no sign of a firm, formal commitment on their part that would allow us to move forward in that direction. Nonetheless we feel that these armed groups no longer have political claims that they can truly brandish, given the fact that the Arusha Accords envisage their participation in transitional institutions, their recruitment into defence and security corps and their social and professional reintegration if they so desire.

While thanking our partners for the variety of initiatives already launched to bring the Burundian rebels into the peace process, I should like once again to call upon all the countries members of the Regional Initiative, the Facilitation in the inter-Burundian negotiations, the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations, and the rest of the international community to continue to bring pressure to bear upon these armed groups so that they will lay down their arms and rejoin other Burundians around the negotiating table without further delay, in conformity with Security Council resolution 1375 (2001), adopted on 29 October 2001, and other resolutions of the Council. We particularly ask for the invaluable help of the countries in our subregion, all of them co-signatories to the Arusha Accords, so that all the necessary steps will be taken to stop these armed groups from attacking Burundi. Notwithstanding these various initiatives, if the rebels continue obstinately to refuse dialogue, my Government will call upon the international community and all parties signatories to the Arusha Accords to do all they possibly can to neutralize and disarm the FDD and FNL and, at the same time, the other negative forces allied to them.

The continuing deterioration in the socio-economic situation in my country constitutes yet another source of major concern for the new government team. Indeed, eight years of the worst kind of fratricidal war, together with three years of unjustified economic embargo, from July 1996 to January 1999, have plunged the country into a state of extreme poverty which will be difficult to overcome. What is more, international cooperation since 1996 has, as it were, been frozen, thus confronting us with a lack of foreign exchange and a major erosion of our monetary situation. Furthermore, in the year 2000, economic activity continued to suffer from the heavy blows of drought, bringing about negative growth for two consecutive years in an essentially agricultural country.

Over the same crisis period, the situation with regard to health has significantly deteriorated. Notwithstanding efforts exerted by my Government, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases such as those linked to malnutrition, continue to rage among our people, already weakened by the horrors of war. The major performance indicators for education reflect a net decline. Access to drinking water and general hygiene conditions have seriously deteriorated at a time when many of our dwellings and the basic social infrastructure, such as schools and health centres, have been destroyed by war.

Faced with a particularly trying situation, Burundi looks for a great deal from the United Nations and its agencies, its various bilateral partners, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to help our economy to recover, in the name of international solidarity and for the benefit of our people plunged today into a state of unprecedented poverty. I thus urgently appeal to my country's various partners to make tangible the reality of the promises made at the Pledging Conference for Burundi, held in Paris from 11 to 12 December 2000, for the purpose of rebuilding and helping the recovery of our economy. A round table following through on these commitments made at that Conference is to be organized in Geneva in December 2001. The Government of Burundi counts on the active participation of our partners, particularly in making available the aid promised.

On the international scene the delegation of Burundi hopes to see the implementation of the provisions of the Millennium Declaration adopted last year by the heads of State and Government of Member States of the Organization. It particularly supports the reforming of the Security Council and welcomes the fact that this matter already enjoys the broad-ranging backing of the Members of the United Nations. It

regrets nonetheless that discussions on the modalities that the reform is to take are at an impasse, and this, eight years after the establishment of the Working Group under General Assembly resolution 48/26, adopted on 3 December 1993. My delegation, notwithstanding all that, remains confident that the work of the Working Group concerned will be quickly concluded, the results being of the keenest interest in terms, once again, of galvanizing this major body.

Burundi wishes to draw the attention of the Assembly to the problems that have grown more and more serious and alarming because of the accumulation and excessive and destabilizing proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the arms race. In this connection it is ever more necessary and urgent to develop and effectively implement specific disarmament programmes. We welcome the adoption of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects at the United Nations Conference, held from 9 to 20 July 2001, here in New York. Our surest hope is for that Programme to be effectively implemented to relieve the suffering of people in the regions where this kind of weaponry continues to take the lives of thousands of innocent people. What is more, the Government of Burundi remains devoted to the goal of the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction, whether they be nuclear, chemical or biological.

To have peace and security prevail required adopting a working strategy for conflict prevention, with a view to understanding fully the motives and dynamics of confrontation and to curing this evil at its root. It also means resolutely attacking the structural causes that drive people to revolt, namely ignorance, want, disease, extreme poverty, underdevelopment and its corollaries, and inequities in the distribution of wealth. There is a chain directly linking desperate acts and the fanaticism bred of frustration and humiliation. Thus, the imbalance between the North and the South is unlikely to promote harmonious equilibrium. Indeed, on the basis of available statistics, more than one third of mankind lives in absolute poverty. This is liable to grow worse if the rich countries continue not to shoulder their responsibilities in terms of aid for development.

Improving the living conditions of people contributes, through its induced effects, to reducing other anachronistic factors growing out of poverty, such as the child labour ban by International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. My delegation continues to hope that the International Conference on Financing for Development, scheduled for March 2002 in Mexico, will adopt strategies to reduce these inequalities between and within countries. It expects from that Conference a definition of the strategic objectives in terms of consistent policies for integrating developing countries into the global economy, whatever their level of development.

As to globalization, many indeed are those that denounce its perverse effects, as witness the clashes in Seattle and Genoa. In this context, we are duty-bound to see to it that globalization becomes a positive force for all mankind in the best interests of all. Yet another issue of concern to my delegation continues to be that of human dignity, which cannot be conceived as divorced from respect for human rights, including that of self-determination. Towards that end, the delegation of Burundi continues to hope that the Second International Decade for the Elimination of Colonialism, from 2001 to 2010, proclaimed by the Assembly by its resolution 55/146 of 8 December 2000, will help to eradicate its last bastions.

It is impossible to talk about international concord without calling to mind the right to justice, genuine justice and real fairness in the settlement of disputes. On that score my delegation would like yet again to reiterate the importance the Government of Burundi ascribes to the International Criminal Court, regarding which preliminary steps towards ratification are being taken. Indeed, my delegation shares the same conviction as the Secretary-General of our Organization, Mr. Kofi Annan, when he affirms that we must build a world where order and justice reign in terms of respect for the primacy of law in international relations.

The challenges confronting the international community are multiple and take many forms. The efficacy of the Organization will be judged by its ability to keep cohesion intact and to promote people's holistic development, so as to fashion a world where all can realize their potential and where we all espouse peace, fraternity and equality. We are all called upon to strive towards the realization of that noble cause.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call upon His Excellency Mr. Hasmy Agam, Chairman of the delegation of Malaysia.

Mr. Agam (Malaysia): My delegation would like to congratulate the distinguished Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea on his election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I have no doubt that under his able and wise stewardship he will be able to guide the proceedings of this Assembly to a successful conclusion. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau, including your good self, Sir.

I should also like to join other speakers in expressing my delegation's gratitude to Mr. Harri Holkeri for the excellent manner in which he conducted and guided the work of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

I should also like to congratulate Mr. Kofi Annan on his re-election as Secretary-General for another five-year term. We are confident that he will continue to serve the Organization with the same single-minded commitment he has shown in the past. We also congratulate him and the United Nations on being awarded the centennial Nobel Peace Prize. That is due recognition of the many contributions that he and the Organization have made in the service of the international community.

We are gratified that we are finally able to convene the general debate after the uncertainties that we have had to face in the wake of the horrific events of 11 September 2001. Malaysia strongly condemned the terrorist attacks and shared the anguish of the American people over the senseless deaths of so many thousands of innocent people. We once again express our profound condolences to the United States and other countries that lost their nationals in that tragedy. We ourselves lost a number of our own and understand the pain of the bereaved. As an Islamic country, we are very much concerned that a group of misguided people, identified as Muslims, carried out such terrible acts in the name of our sacred religion. They have tarnished the name of Islam, which stands for peace, and have tried to equate their creed of terror with that of our faith, thereby doing a great disservice to our great religion and our community. Fortunately, their ploy has not worked. In this regard we are grateful to President George W. Bush and other world leaders for categorically rejecting the stereotyping and association of Islam and Muslims with terrorism. In this regard, every effort should be made to ensure that people of the Islamic faith are not discriminated against simply because of their faith, ethnic background or the country they come from.

On an unrelated matter, my delegation extends its sincere condolences to the delegations of the United States and the Dominican Republic, and those of other Member States, for the loss of their nationals in the tragic air crash that occurred yesterday on Long Island.

Malaysia is ready to contribute to the global effort to combat the scourge of terrorism. In dealing with the issue, there is a need for the international community, through the United Nations, to work out a sound strategy incorporating all aspects of the problem. While we understand the natural urge for retribution against the people who are believed to be behind the heinous attacks and their supporters, we do not think military actions are the best and most effective solution, nor politically a wise one. We are concerned that military actions may raise more problems than they solve. A sound strategy should include, aside from the military option, political/diplomatic efforts and legal, economic and other measures. It should involve a long and sustained campaign in an effort to get at and destroy, once and for all, each and every root of the terrorist organization or organizations behind these attacks.

A concerted and coordinated effort on the part of the international community is the most appropriate and effective approach. For this purpose there is a need for the convening of an international conference at the highest level to consider the issue of terrorism in all its aspects and manifestations, including the necessity of agreeing on the definition of what constitutes terrorism. That is important so that pure terrorism, which cannot be excused under any pretext, can be differentiated from the legitimate struggles of peoples under colonial or alien domination and foreign occupation for self-determination and national liberation, as recognized by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and other international declarations. Agreement on the definition of terrorism is vitally important so as to clear up any ambiguities and uncertainties that may hamper international cooperation. Such a conference should also address the important issue of the root causes of, or factors that spawn, terrorism. Those factors may be political, economic or social, but they must be addressed in all

seriousness and objectivity so that appropriate strategies and practical and effective measures can be formulated to deal with them.

As for Afghanistan, there should be an immediate cessation of the current bombings in order to spare the hapless people of Afghanistan further harm and suffering. They have suffered too long enough — 20 years too long. They should be allowed to return to their villages and homes to prepare for the cold winter season and Ramadan, which are fast approaching. The cessation of the bombings would also allow for the return of international relief workers so that they can resume their commendable humanitarian work. Enormous amounts of international assistance are required. We commend those countries that have responded generously and appeal to those that have not done so. We ourselves have set up an Afghanistan Relief Fund with a very positive response from both the Government and the public. On the political/diplomatic front, the United Nations should make every effort to bring peace to Afghanistan through a political settlement. We hope that the debate that is now going on in the Security Council on this issue will yield constructive results.

The situation in Palestine and the Middle East continues to be a matter of serious concern to the international community. The issue must be urgently addressed, not only for its own sake but also to prevent it from being exploited by certain groups of people for their own ends. It is imperative, if enduring peace is to be achieved in the Middle East, for the peace process to be revived on an urgent basis. We believe that the Mitchell report offers a good basis for bringing the situation back to the negotiating table. We commend the Palestinian Authority for unambiguously accepting the report. However, we regret that the Israeli side, while indicating general "acceptance", rejected major parts of the report, including the call for the complete cessation of settlement activity, one of the main causes of the current cycle of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The continued military offensive against the Palestinians raises questions about the sincerity of the Israeli leadership to work for peace. The Israeli authorities have tried to cow the Palestinian people by an overwhelming use of force, using an assortment of its formidable arsenals. That excessive use of force has resulted in more than 800 Palestinians being killed and more than 20,000 being wounded. Regrettably, the calls of the international community have fallen on deaf ears as the Israeli forces continue their offensive against the Palestinians on the pretext of ending the campaign against terrorism. The aggressive actions by the occupying Power must cease if peace is to be given a chance to grow.

There is no military solution to the problem. Indeed, the provocative measures taken by Israel will only aggravate the situation. We therefore strongly urge the Israeli Government to desist from pursuing a military solution. A just, comprehensive and lasting solution is possible only through a negotiated political settlement — a process that the international community and this body must actively pursue. This must include the complete withdrawal of Israel from all Arab and Palestinian land occupied since 1967, including the city of Al-Quds al-Sharif and the occupied Syrian Golan. We also reaffirm our support for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital. Only the implementation of all international resolutions on the Palestinian issue can guarantee lasting peace between Israel and Palestine. We once again call on Israel to comply with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and all other relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. Equally, we look forward to the return of the Syrian Golan without further delay. We hope to see a future environment that will bring development and opportunities in a peaceful and stable Middle East.

Malaysia has consistently voiced its opposition to the use of sanctions as an instrument of collective punishment. No one can deny its debilitating effects on the general populace of the affected countries. We therefore strongly urge the international community, in particular the Security Council, to seriously review the impact of sanctions on Member States, particularly those imposed on Iraq and Libya, which in our view should be lifted as soon as possible as they have already served their purpose.

The danger of a nuclear holocaust remains real and serious. We should strive for the ultimate objective of a world free of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. We should make every effort to strengthen all existing nuclear-related disarmament, arms control and reduction measures. The multilateral search for genuine measures for disarmament and non-proliferation, particularly in

the nuclear area, must remain the highest priority on the global disarmament agenda.

After more than 20 years of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the United Nations finally recognized its catastrophic impact on populations around the world and convened a special session for an expanded response to the pandemic. It is now up to the international community to take resolute and concerted action to combat this scourge and to acknowledge that the world's most affected populations are also among the poorest and lack the much-needed resources to act alone. With about 95 per cent of all HIV-infected people living in developing countries, it is essential that every assistance be given to them to combat the scourge. We hope that a review conference will be convened a few years from now to assess how far we have come in our fight against this devastating disease.

Racism constitutes one of the most heinous forms of human rights violations, not only in itself, but as it also gives rise to other egregious forms of systematic human rights violations such as colonialism, slavery and genocide. These have in turn resulted in poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization and social exclusion for far too many. We are therefore heartened that the outcome of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban recently, contained elements that will further our efforts to eradicate racism, the most prominent of which is the recognition by the international community that slavery and the slave trade are crimes against humanity. Unfortunately, we view the outcome documents as inadequate as they do not sufficiently address the plight of the Palestinian people, who are victims of policies based on discrimination and exclusion.

We look forward to the upcoming special session on children as an affirmation of the centrality of children to our common future and a positive proof of our commitment to ensuring the survival, protection and development of all children around the world. While many of the goals set by the World Summit for Children have been achieved, an estimated 600 million children are still struggling to survive, eat and learn on less than $1 a day. Let us also not overlook the plight of children affected by sanctions, such as the hapless children of Iraq, many of whom do not survive beyond the age of five.

Many of us in the developing world had welcomed, indeed embraced, globalization almost unquestioningly as if it were a panacea for all our problems, only to be disillusioned over time when we found that rather than a holistic process benefiting all of humanity, it was being pursued more often than not as a strategy for the benefit of a few. While the world is richer today, millions of people are still living in absolute poverty, suffering from want, sickness and malnutrition. Globalization is a complex process, with as many opportunities as challenges. While the impact of globalization is profound and pervasive, not all of it is necessarily positive. As we embrace it there is a need to ensure that we minimize its negative impact, particularly on the developing countries.

If globalization in its present form is pursued, characterized, inter alia, by weakened national sovereignty and growing ownership and control of new technologies by powerful nations, it will not be the universal remedy it was thought to be. The Asian financial crisis demonstrated forcefully the downside of globalization. It demonstrated the inherent instability of the world economic system, in which trade and economic liberalization have not necessarily led to faster growth and development for the developing countries. What is clear is that growth and development require an enabling international environment and international support that can promote growth with equity for the benefit of all.

To enable developing countries to participate in and benefit equally from globalization, adequate funding for development, among other things, is required. It is therefore most disheartening to see the steady decline over the years in the volume of official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries. The continued need for an inflow of ODA and new and additional financial resources will become even more critical with the advancement of globalization and the shift to the new knowledge-based economy. Unless the ODA situation improves, the developing countries will be further marginalized in a rapidly globalizing world economy, characterized by rapid change, high technology and stiff competition. The developing countries, particularly the least developed, must therefore continue to be assisted in a more sustained fashion in order to bring about a more equitable distribution of growth and economic prosperity. The developing countries, for their part,

must put their house in order by adopting sound economic policies.

The issue of financing for development is particularly relevant and vitally important in solving the problems of development faced by many countries. The International Conference on Financing for Development, in Mexico early next year, will provide the opportunity for us to achieve international consensus on issues pertaining to financing for development in all its aspects. We thank the Government of Mexico for its willingness to host that important Conference and look forward to participating constructively in Monterrey. We hope that the Conference will be able to address the core problems relating to financing for development, including other systemic issues such as the reform of the international financial architecture, on which, in spite of a general recognition of the need for reform, there has been no progress thus far.

As an innovative source of financing for development, the Conference in Monterrey could also consider, inter alia, the possibility of establishing an appropriate system of international taxation for the purpose of infrastructure-building in the least developed countries. This international tax, which was suggested by my Prime Minister, Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, will be contributed by those countries that have benefited from international trade, over and above the economic aid given by them to the developing countries. Malaysia is quite prepared to contribute to such an infrastructure tax.

The challenge facing developing countries in integrating themselves into the international trading system lies in their ability to fully and actively participate in the multilateral trading system. Regrettably, many developing countries have not benefited from global trade liberalization because of their inability to have access to the markets of developed countries. Although globalization carries with it the notion of free trade, many developed countries maintain protectionist regimes and subsidies as basic instruments of economic policy, even as they insist on opening up the markets of the developing countries in the name of globalization. It is also disappointing to the developing countries that, structurally, little has been done in the area of trade to improve their ability and capability to compete in the global market. There is, therefore, an urgent need to facilitate the integration of the developing countries into the global trading system through, inter alia, the special differential measures provided for under the Uruguay Round. A new round, should it be launched, should ensure that negotiations effectively address the particular concerns and problems of developing countries. However, any negotiations will have to formally recognize that the least developed countries — indeed, for that matter, many of the developing countries — have neither the financial nor human resources to meet their existing obligations, let alone the outcome of future negotiations. In this regard we believe that the role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), as one of the few mechanisms concerned with the development of the developing countries, is of the utmost importance. We hope that UNCTAD will continue to play a leading role in helping developing countries, particularly in efforts to reach the Millennium Declaration's development target of halving poverty by the year 2015.

With regard to the situation in Africa, my delegation welcomes the United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted last year, which, among other things, pledged to pay special attention to meeting the special needs of Africa. The international community must continue to assist African countries in their development needs. We should continue to assist our African brothers in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development. Malaysia, for its part, has been able to make a modest contribution through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme, launched in 1981. To date, many participants from African countries have taken part in various short-term and medium-term courses in the public, administration and technical fields in Malaysia. We have also developed economic relations with some African countries based on the concept of smart partnership, involving Governments and the private sector, with the goal of promoting sound and sustainable economic activities to ensure a win-win relationship for all. Within our limited resources, Malaysia looks forward to further consolidating our cooperation and solidarity with Africa in the spirit of South-South cooperation.

Malaysia welcomes the Secretary-General's pledge to move the United Nations from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. This culture should be the cornerstone of the Organization's collective security system for this century. It is a far better and

more cost-effective approach, in financial as well as in human terms, than mounting any operation or activity after a conflict has erupted. We are pleased to note that the Secretary-General continues to pursue that culture with the relevant regional organizations in order to further enhance a comprehensive approach by drawing on regional preventive strategies. We urge the Secretary-General to continue to consult the relevant regional or subregional groups in this regard.

In conclusion, I should like to raise an issue that was mentioned by my Prime Minister, Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, when he addressed the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. The problem relates to immunities granted to nationals of Member States by virtue of the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and the 1947 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of Specialized Agencies once they are appointed as officials of the United Nations, such as a rapporteur. While Malaysia acknowledges the need for immunities to be granted to ensure that these officials are able to carry out their mandate effectively, it seems that they are able to hide behind this cloak of immunity for every criticism made of their own Government, including words that fall outside their mandate. Surely even they should be treated as ordinary citizens, governed by the laws of the land, when they are not officially "on mission". My delegation calls for clear guidelines to govern the conduct of United Nations officials, especially when residing in their own countries, so that their actions fall strictly within their mandates and that they will enjoy immunities there only at such times as they are officially performing their functions as United Nations officials, and not all year round. Surely, also, there should be a better basis for the appointment of United Nations officials — a nominee should be one who is known for his or her neutral or unbiased views, and not who, in the words of my Prime Minister "is well known for his virulent attacks" — to report on any given matter. Surely on this issue the United Nations would be among the first to agree that while there is a need to protect and ensure the freedom and impartiality of its officials, it must also, at the same time, protect the rights and interests of its Member States.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Anthony Charles Rolle, Chairman of the delegation of the Bahamas.

Mr. Rolle (Bahamas): The President has been elected to chair at what is undoubtedly one of the most challenging sessions of the General Assembly in recent times. My delegation congratulates him on his election. We pledge our full support to him and express our confidence that under his leadership the work of the Assembly will have a positive impact on our collective efforts to meet the many challenges facing our world.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to commend his predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, for his leadership as President of the fifty-fifth session, the Millennium Assembly.

We are in times of great tragedy but also of laudable triumphs. The Secretary-General and the United Nations have rendered outstanding and inspiring service to the world's peoples. Mr. Secretary-General, we celebrate with you and this Organization the well-deserved Nobel Peace Prize awarded to you, even as we express our appreciation for the exemplary leadership that you continue to provide to the United Nations.

My delegation also wishes to take this opportunity to express its sincere sympathy to the Governments of the United States and the Dominican Republic and to the families of those who lost their lives in the crash of a United States commercial aircraft in New York yesterday.

While recognizing the many challenges the global community will face in the twenty-first century, leaders at last year's Millennium Assembly nonetheless were optimistic that peace and prosperity would be important hallmarks of the new century. Their hopes have been severely undermined by the indefensible acts of terrorism perpetrated in the United States on 11 September 2001. The horrific scenes of death and destruction in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, so indelibly etched in our minds, have no doubt changed the world forever. The Government and the people of the Bahamas mourned with countries all over the world, including our sister Caribbean countries that lost loved ones, and expressed our sadness at the senseless loss of life and wanton destruction of property.

Even as events in Afghanistan unfold, the United Nations, and indeed the world, now face a dilemma: how to confront the grave challenge which international terrorism has defiantly issued to the world and at the same time meet the Charter obligations to

promote human rights and social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. We must be visionary and creative in ensuring that the resources and energies of the United Nations and of the international community are used to implement a balanced agenda that will deal effectively and resolutely with terrorists and terrorism and that will also continue to have a positive impact on human rights, economic and social development and other common objectives.

The international community has spoken with one voice in condemning international terrorism as a major destabilizing force in the world. The acts of 11 September 2001 fundamentally shifted security concerns regarding terrorists and terrorism to the workplace, streets and homes of innocent people, creating anxiety, insecurity and uncertainty worldwide. Significantly, the terrorist acts have had serious and damaging consequences on a rapidly globalizing world economy. The economies of both industrialized and developing countries have been severely disrupted, with grave implications for future economic and financial stability. The economic outlook, particularly for many developing countries, is indeed grim. The small economies of the countries in the Caribbean have experienced massive disruption because of their vulnerability to external shocks and heavy dependence on tourism, especially from the North American market. There has been significant loss of employment in the tourism, financial services and related sectors, even as government revenues have fallen and foreign reserves are threatened.

The countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have moved decisively to assess the implications of the terrorist attacks on its member States. As Chair of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM, the Bahamas was host to a special emergency meeting of the Conference, held on 11 and 12 October 2001, which adopted the Nassau Declaration on International Terrorism. That Declaration sets out the action that Governments would take to mitigate the impact on the region's tourism, aviation, financial services and agricultural sectors, which are the major contributors to the gross national product, foreign exchange earnings and employment in the countries of our region.

CARICOM heads of Government also unequivocally condemned terrorism in all its forms and reaffirmed their commitment to work with the international community in the multifaceted fight against terrorism, in accordance with international law and conventions. It is therefore our hope that the international community will support the countries of CARICOM during this difficult and challenging period.

We in the Bahamas have taken our obligation to cooperate in the fight against terrorism very seriously. We have complied with Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1333 (2000) which calls for the freezing of funds and other financial assets of Osama bin Laden, the Al Qaeda organization and individuals associated with it. The International Obligations, Economic and Ancillary Measures Order 2001, enacted in our Parliament in September this year, prohibits any person dealing with any property and any financial institution licensed in the Bahamas from transacting business with Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda or any individuals or entities associated with them, who, for these purposes, may be designated from time to time. We have been able to take such timely action because of a comprehensive legislative regime enacted in December 2000 which put in place an effective regulatory regime to ensure that the Bahamas financial services sector is not abused by criminals for money-laundering or any other financial crimes. It was the enactment of that legislation that resulted in the Financial Action Task Force's removal of the Bahamas, in June of this year, from its list of non-cooperative jurisdictions in the fight against money-laundering. As part of its overall review of the international regime for action against terrorists and terrorism, in October this year my Government signed the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. We are following very closely the discussions on a comprehensive convention against terrorism, in order to determine what further action the Government will need to take in this area. We hope that a comprehensive, practical and implementable instrument will be adopted that will take into account the existing anti-terrorism regime. In this we see a clearly delineated role for the United Nations, and particularly the Security Council, which is well placed to articulate a coherent policy for global cooperation in the fight against international terrorism.

Meeting our obligations, however, has not been without sacrifice. The Bahamas, like many other Caribbean countries, has been obliged to divert scarce resources from other critical development objectives to initiate the sweeping security changes required at our

airports and seaports and otherwise to mitigate the impact of the 11 September events.

For the Government and people of the Bahamas, the ravages of hurricane Michelle have further compounded the significant economic setbacks caused by the 11 September events in the United States. Just last week, that hurricane made a direct hit on our archipelagic State, causing extensive damage to infrastructure, agriculture and vegetation in some of our major islands. The Government is still determining the extent of the damage but has already begun the essential period of reconstruction.

The President returned to the Chair.

Globalization and trade liberalization are, and must remain, central issues on the world's agenda. Generally, globalization has presented significant opportunities and has had a positive impact on many countries. However, for others, particularly in the developing world, the freer flow of capital, technology, finance, goods and services across national boundaries — which is the essence of globalization — has not met the stated objectives of improving overall economic prosperity, reducing poverty and closing the technological gap. On the contrary, the social costs of globalization — poverty, inequality and unemployment — remain serious challenges for many of the countries of the developing world. These challenges are further compounded by factors including an onerous debt burden, a limited or inadequate export infrastructure to effectively participate in the global trading system, and an inability to access the markets of the developed world. My Government, nevertheless, is cognizant that the international trading regime of the World Trade Organization (WTO) provides a significant framework within which countries may benefit from globalization and trade liberalization, and work towards appropriately addressing the costs and risks associated with the global trading system. In July this year, the Bahamas submitted its application for accession to the WTO, for WTO membership is a priority for my Government and we hope that our application will receive the requisite support.

We are in a period, leading up to late 2002, during which the United Nations is defining its economic and social development agenda with greater precision, through a series of assessments of international action in specific areas. The Bahamas was pleased to have participated in the Organization's review of its work and setting of its agenda for further action in the areas of racism, racial discrimination and human settlements and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. My Government believes that every effort should be made to consolidate those areas in which progress was made at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance that took place in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 8 September this year. Global objectives in respect of human settlements received considerable impetus from the special session on human settlements that took place in New York in June 2001. The Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, adopted by the Conference, should prove invaluable in addressing chronic problems of inadequate shelter.

The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects addressed a problem that for the small countries of the Caribbean is a particularly serious one. We wished the Conference could have been more forthright in its adoption of measures to better address these critical issues but readily accept the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as an essential first step. Decisions taken at these and other United Nations meetings are indeed decisions of the Organization that the Bahamas hopes will be implemented as such by all Member States.

Few countries in the world, if any, have been spared the vagaries of HIV/AIDS. The statistics are compelling — more than 30 million people affected. With respect to the developing world they are even more compelling — more than 95 per cent of those affected live in the developing world. The Caribbean region has not been spared, but we are taking decisive action. Our Pan-Caribbean Partnership launched in February this year has the full support and commitment of heads of Government for effective action against HIV/AIDS in the wider Caribbean region. The Government of the Bahamas in this regard welcomes the contribution of the Government of Canada to the Caribbean HIV/AIDS programme. The special session on HIV/AIDS held in New York in June 2001 gave heads of State and Government the opportunity to set an agenda for slowing and reversing the destructive impact of HIV/AIDS throughout the world. It is an agenda that must be implemented to halt and reverse this tragedy that is devastating populations and

threatening to reverse the development gains made in many developing countries. The developing world will, and must, look for help and support to those having the technology, research capacity and resources by which they themselves have been able to control the spread of this deadly disease.

The year 2002 will also be an active one, both for United Nations benchmark assessments and readjustment of priorities and for addressing significant issues on the international agenda. The International Conference on Financing for Development will be convened in Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002. As plans develop, we hope that all Members of the United Nations will come to appreciate the need to ensure that the Conference provides the framework within which commitments can be made so that technical assistance can be provided to poor countries for basic infrastructural development, the standards of people worldwide who live in endemic poverty can be raised, developing countries can be assisted to attract foreign direct investment, and information technology can be more freely transferred to developing countries. My Government, for its part, is of the view that small, developing, middle-income countries such as the Bahamas, because of their economic and ecological vulnerabilities, should not be excluded from development financing. It is also the view of my Government that the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be convened in South Africa in September 2002, should be complementary to undertakings made at the International Conference on Financing for Development. Ten years after the Rio Summit of 1992, the ever-increasing fury of natural disasters, climate change and sea-level rise, and the depletion of biological resources and overall environmental degradation, are but some of the issues begging reassessment that must be part of the blueprint for determined action emanating from South Africa. Likewise, the Bahamas hopes that the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in Madrid, Spain, in 2002, and the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children, postponed to 2002, should assess progress but, more importantly, must emphasize action that will provide guidance for national, regional and international policy and planning in their respective areas.

The initiatives the United Nations will take up in 2002 to review and assess progress in a significant number of areas should bring clearly into focus the actions that must be taken by Member States and by the Organization to accomplish agreed economic and social objectives. It is the hope of the Bahamas that these reviews will be followed by a period of intense implementation of decisions that have been agreed, so that qualitative and quantitative improvements may be realized in all areas. We believe that such improvements are essential but must be in concert with United Nations initiatives to meet demands in other critical areas, such as conflict resolution, war, and humanitarian crises worldwide. They should also be in concert with the Organization's efforts to address effectively and comprehensively issues such as the illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, alien smuggling and refugee flows, which do not respect national boundaries. In all such cases, the danger of inaction could have dire consequences, particularly for international peace and security.

In conclusion, the current preoccupation with terrorism has fortunately not paralysed the United Nations. What it has done is to emphasize the need for an effective and cohesive United Nations, capable of responding flexibly to unexpected and contradictory events in a timely and effective manner with little or no disruption of its programmes in other areas. We believe that the United Nations Charter constitutes a viable and firm foundation for the Organization to balance and achieve its objectives, to maintain international peace and security and promote economic and social progress. The Bahamas fully supports the United Nations in all its endeavours.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Li Hyong Chol, Chairman of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Li Hyong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English text furnished by the delegation*): I congratulate you, Sir, once again on your election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I also wish to express high appreciation to Mr. Harri Holkeri, who carried out his duties as President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly in an excellent manner. I would like to take this opportunity to extend warm congratulations again to Mr. Kofi Annan on his re-election as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Last year, heads of State and Government throughout the world held the Millennium Summit in

this Hall and committed themselves to building a peaceful and prosperous world in the new century. That gave high hope and expectations to all people of the world. However, the developments that are now taking place on the globe overshadow possible implementation of the Millennium Summit commitments. The principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality that constitute a cornerstone of international relations are being undermined by certain forces that consider strength as the means to achieve everything. As long as there is acquiescence to acts of arbitrary power that seek to destroy strategic stability and hold absolute supremacy by establishing a missile defence system in defiance of international opposition, the world will be engulfed in another cold war and arms race.

The problem of the Korean peninsula always comes up as one of the major issues in deliberations on global peace and security. That is because of the power policy and arbitrary actions directed in most cases against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We are exposed to constant threats from huge armed forces, including nuclear weapons, deployed around the Korean peninsula on the pretext of an alleged threat from North Korea, and that is the main source of instability on the Korean peninsula and in the Asia-Pacific region. That notwithstanding, we have been able firmly to defend the dignity and sovereignty of the country on our own in the face of the offensive by hostile forces, and under difficult conditions resembling an arduous march, unprecedented in our history, thus contributing to the peace and security of the region. That is entirely attributable to the outstanding army-first policies of the respected General Kim Jong Il. The great leader General Kim Jong Il conducted active diplomacy, including his visit to China and Russia and his meeting with the top-level delegation of the European Union this year, and thus made a great contribution to developing overall international relations and strengthening global peace and security.

In particular, the summit meetings and talks between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and China resulted in the adoption of documents reflecting shared views on strengthening the leading role of the United Nations in resolving major international issues, ensuring strategic balance, and so on. This serves as an historic milestone in establishing a fair, new world, based on the principles of mutual respect and cooperation for mutual benefit. We will, as ever, firmly defend our sovereignty and the socialist system of our country and advance convincingly along the road chosen by ourselves under the army-first leadership of the respected General Kim Jong Il.

It is the unanimous desire of all Korean people to reunify the divided country at the earliest possible date. Last year, the inter-Korean summit meeting was held and the North-South Joint Declaration issued for the first time in the history of the national division, thanks to the idea of national independence and great national unity of the great leader, Comrade Kim Jong Il. The Joint Declaration reflects the will and aspirations of the Korean people to achieve reunification independently by pooling the efforts of the nation. It enjoys wide support and is welcomed by the international community. The General Assembly, at its fifty-fifth session, unanimously adopted the resolution supporting the Joint Declaration. With the publication of the Joint Declaration, the enthusiasm for reunification was manifested throughout the Korean peninsula and dialogues and contacts in various fields took place between the North and the South of Korea. It demonstrated that the Korean nation could well open the door to reunification by itself, if the North and the South make joint efforts with sincere will for independent reunification. However, inter-Korean relations and the implementation of the 15 June Joint Declaration, which were proceeding well and in the right direction, now face a big obstacle due to the hard-line, hostile policy and unjust interference of the new United States Administration against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The half-century history of national division and, in particular, experiences during the past year, clearly show that the North and South of Korea should, above all, adhere to a stance of national independence if they are to implement the North-South Joint Declaration. Only when the North and South collaborate as one nation will they open up a bright future for the nation, without becoming a victim of outside forces. The most important element in implementing the North-South Joint Declaration and achieving peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula is to put an end to the hostile policy and interference of the United States against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It is totally irrational to say that the United States deploys huge armed forces in and around the Korean peninsula and

conducts large-scale military exercises against us to advance peace, self-defensive measures taken by my country to cope with the United States military threat is a threat to peace. Our missile programme is of a purely peaceful nature and does not pose a threat to any country that respects the sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

It makes no sense for the United States to argue that it needs to establish a missile defence system out of fear of our missiles while itself possessing thousands of nuclear bombs and missiles that could extinguish humankind many times over. That argument only covers up the United States strategy to gain domination of the world, based on superior power. Since the cold war is over and the North and South of Korea are proceeding towards reconciliation and cooperation in accordance with the 15 June Joint Declaration, there is neither reason nor any other ground whatsoever for United States troops to remain in the South of Korea. Withdrawal of United States troops from South Korea is an urgent issue whose solution should not brook any further delay in the interest of ensuring peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in North-East Asia. Dialogue should be conducted on a fair and equal basis. Resumption of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States of America dialogue will only be possible when the present United States Administration gets rid of its cold-war mentality and adopts a stance at least at the level of the one taken by the Clinton Administration in the last period of its term of office.

During the past two years, we have established official relations with almost all member States of the European Union (EU) and diplomatic relations with the EU itself, and countries of other regions as well, on the basis of the principles of respect for sovereignty and equality. We are also ready to develop relations with the United States on the principles of equality and mutual benefit if the United States respects our sovereignty and freedom of choice, takes an attitude of good will towards us on an equal footing, and refrains from obstructing the reunification of Korea.

Another factor of instability that casts a dark shadow on the future development of the Korean peninsula and its surroundings is the orientation of Japanese moves, that is, the ultra-rightist inclination of Japan and its undisguised attempt to revive militarism. My delegation wishes to draw the attention of all Member States to this matter at this session of the General Assembly held in the first year of the twenty-first century. The Japanese authorities are not willing to terminate their past crimes against humanity, but try instead to justify them, openly visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, where the departed souls of the war criminals are enshrined, distorting history textbooks for new generations and legalizing the overseas advance of the Japanese self-defence force.

On 29 August, Japan test-fired an H-2A large-size delivery rocket that could easily be converted into an intercontinental ballistic missile. That is a clear indication that the militarism of Japan has become politicized and is proceeding to an open and dangerous stage.

Japan, which has always stigmatized our peaceful satellite launch as a missile launch, said openly that its test-fire of the rocket was done to cope with North Korea's missile, thus invoking military confrontation. Japan should not misjudge our moratorium on satellite launches and the peaceful character of our missile programme. We strongly urge Japan to look squarely at reality; put an end to its past inhumane crimes, and sincerely turn to the road of peace in this new century. That will be good for the future of Japan.

The most important task of Member States today is to strengthen the central role of the United Nations with regard to international issues. It is essential that Member States honour and implement the United Nations Charter in good faith. The United Nations Charter enshrines the purposes and principles for developing friendly international relations on the basis of sovereign equality. However, certain countries do not hesitate to undertake unilateral coercive actions and even resort to the use of force against sovereign States, ignoring and violating the United Nations Charter. Member States should reject any attempt that goes against the United Nations Charter and other principles and norms of international law, and should strive to establish a fair, new world structure based on the rule of law, equality, mutual respect and cooperation for mutual benefit, with a view to ensuring world security and stability. If the leading role of the United Nations in dealing with global issues is to be strengthened, the United Nations should be reformed in a democratic way. In this regard, we are of the view that it is essential to strengthen the authority of the General Assembly. The General Assembly must be empowered to consider issues relating to world peace and security and approve major resolutions of the Security Council

on these issues. Reform of the Security Council should be pursued in the context of strengthening the authority of the General Assembly. We hold that the Security Council reform should be undertaken in full conformity with its intrinsic purpose. The Security Council reform must ensure enough representation of the developing countries and full fairness in United Nations activities for achieving international peace and security. We place on record our strong opposition to considering in any manner the permanent membership of Japan on the Security Council when it has neither put an end to nor recognized its past crimes, and while no agreement has yet been reached on increasing the number of permanent members.

One of the major challenges to the United Nations and its Member States today is global poverty, which grows ever more serious. Poverty, which has resulted from colonialism in the past, continues to be aggravated due to the inequitable international monetary systems and neo-colonial policies. It also becomes a factor that begets conflicts, diseases and hunger and hampers the independent and creative life of peoples and their enjoyment of the right to development. If poverty is to be eradicated, a fair and equitable international economic order should be established and sustainable development ensured. We will have to draw due lessons from the demonstrations in Genoa last July and properly handle the issue of globalization. In this regard, it should be underlined that the developed countries and the international financial institutions assume big responsibilities. The United Nations should encourage Member States to direct their attention to considering more practical measures for eradicating poverty and achieving development.

It is the consistent and principled position of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to oppose support, of whatever kind, to any forms of terrorism. The large-scale terrorist incident that occurred in the United States on 11 September was very regrettable and tragic and reminds us of the gravity of terrorism. The situation in Afghanistan is now grave, where instability and unprecedented human loss and material damage are brought about by the military operation of the United States. The prevailing situation requires that the leading role of the United Nations in preventing terrorism be definitely strengthened and the national obligations for the elimination of terrorism be fully discharged by all Member States.

Yesterday we signed the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and acceded to the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages. That shows that we are making every possible effort to eliminate terrorism in the world. As already stated, the aim of our opposing terrorism is to promote global peace and stability, defend the sovereignty of the country and nation and protect the lives and property of the peoples of the world. We are strongly of the view that imposing the label of terrorist on countries that advocate sovereign equality, while violating their sovereignty and inflicting immeasurable pain on the people by resorting to arbitrary armed intervention, sanctions, and so on, should in no way be tolerated. There is no justification in any case for the use of force or resorting to war and taking innocent lives, undermining the situation and destroying stability in the fight against terrorism.

My delegation wishes to reaffirm that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to cooperate fully with all Member States to uphold and implement the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter under the ideas of independence, peace and friendship.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rashid Alimov, Chairman of the delegation of Tajikistan.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): This session of the General Assembly is facing the very important task of comparing and coordinating the positions of the members of the international community on the most urgent issues of our time, that is, ensuring strategic stability and equal security for all States, strengthening the coordinating role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and the settlement of regional conflict, fighting poverty and disease, and creating conditions for sustainable development and prosperity of all peoples on our planet. It is clear that the search for a collective response to the unprecedented challenge thrown down to mankind by international terrorism on 11 September has become a key subject of this session.

The twentieth century proved convincingly that the United Nations has indeed become the centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in maintaining

peace, ensuring collective security, developing international cooperation, and ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Thanks to the joint efforts of its Member States, the Organization has, in 55 years, become a universal forum capable of developing joint political approaches of the community of nations towards resolving the most urgent and complicated problems of world development. The role of the United Nations as the most representative international forum for discussing the whole range of problems faced by mankind, and developing approaches for international cooperation in dealing with such problems, is becoming more significant with each passing year. In the view of the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rakhmonov, the task of strengthening the central role of the United Nations has become more rather than less urgent.

During the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly the Republic of Tajikistan will be celebrating the tenth anniversary of its United Nations membership. Since the first day of its international recognition, Tajikistan has been working closely with the United Nations. Cooperation with the United Nations in the first years of its independence helped Tajikistan to stop civil strife, to find an effective formula for peace and national accord and now to start post-conflict peace-building.

Mr. Botnaru (Republic of Moldova), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We will never forget that dramatic period and the selfless assistance and support that we were given by Member States, the Security Council, and specialized agencies. Our special gratitude goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose contribution to the settlement of the inter-Tajik conflict deserves the greatest appreciation. We believe that the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the United Nations also reflects the success achieved under its leadership by the international community in the peaceful settlement of the internal conflict in Tajikistan and in overcoming its consequences. We are convinced that the unique experience of peacemaking in Tajikistan deserves in-depth consideration and study. Practical lessons learned from the settlement of the inter-Tajik conflict and the United Nations peacemaking activities will enable the international community to find new approaches towards resolving conflicts in other hot spots on the planet.

The variety of problems dealt with by the United Nations highlights the unique and universal role played by the Organization in regulating international affairs. That is particularly important in the field of international security. The Republic of Tajikistan calls for ensuring strategic stability in the world based on maintaining the existing system of agreements and treaties on disarmament and a continuing process of arms limitation, on both a unilateral and multilateral basis. Tajikistan, for its part, is prepared to make its contribution to this process. In cooperation with our neighbouring States, we are actively working to implement the initiative of establishing a nuclear-free zone in Central Asia. We hope that a treaty to this effect will shortly be ready for signing by the heads of State in our region, and expect that all nuclear Powers will become its guarantors.

The appalling acts of terror perpetrated in the United States on 11 September forced the whole world to confront the issue of international terrorism and take a fresh look at it. In order to solve this problem, it will be necessary to analyse the whole set of new challenges and threats and develop new approaches towards creating a credible and effective system for countering them. May I remind Member States that, on behalf of the people of Tajikistan, immediately after the terrorist acts, President Emomali Rakhmonov conveyed sincere condolences and sympathy to the families of all those who had died or suffered. He expressed full solidarity with the people of the United States and readiness to cooperate closely with their Government and the Governments of other States in eradicating international terrorism.

Tajikistan has always condemned terrorism in all its manifestations and categorically rejects the use of terrorist acts as a means of achieving political or other goals. We reject any attempts to justify acts of terror on political, religious, philosophical, ethnic or racial grounds. International cooperation in combating terrorism and extremism is not an abstract notion for our country. The Tajik people are very well aware of the methods and practices of international terrorism. In recent years, Tajikistan has repeatedly been a target of terrorist activities carried out from outside. In addition to the huge material losses, such actions always entail loss of life and enormous human suffering. What is worse, terrorism attempts not only to derail the peace process in Tajikistan, but also to destabilize the situation over a vast region of Asia. Acts of

international terrorism constitute a grave threat to international peace and security. In combating terrorism in any part of our planet, the international community should be guided by similar criteria and act in a resolute, sincere and, most important, consistent manner. All States must unconditionally and fully implement the provisions of United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), including those which call for depriving terrorists and their sponsors of financial or any other support and haven.

We believe that one of the primary objectives of this session of the General Assembly is to consolidate the legal framework, under United Nations auspices, for the interaction of States in combating international terrorism. In our view, the early adoption of a comprehensive convention on combating international terrorism and the convention on combating acts of nuclear terrorism could be of great significance in this regard. On various occasions, in particular from this rostrum, the President of Tajikistan has called for uniting the efforts of the community of nations to combat the international terrorist underground. Our country has interacted effectively with other States in combating international terrorism on a bilateral and multilateral basis, in particular within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other international organizations. The United Nations, with its unprecedented experience and authority in coordinating the efforts of its Member States, is called upon to play the key role in establishing a global system to counteract a threat of such magnitude as international terrorism. It will take much effort and time. However, the lofty and vitally important goal of eradicating this dreadful phenomenon is worthy of such endeavour.

The five weeks that have elapsed since the beginning of the military operation in Afghanistan have proved that the Afghan problem cannot be resolved by means of force alone. There is simply no military solution to it, and history has provided convincing proof of that. At the high-level meeting yesterday of the Six plus Two Group, and today at the meeting of the Security Council on Afghanistan, the delegation of Tajikistan emphasized that under current circumstances the Afghan people have a unique opportunity to return to peaceful and stable development. This is an opportunity for Afghanistan to become a full-fledged member of the international community and to change its unfortunate image of an accomplice in international terrorism and other criminal, destructive, destabilizing movements. The Afghan nation is on the threshold of fundamental change. The most crucial task, and I would say a matter of honour for the international community, is to help the Afghan people to take advantage of this opportunity. Everything must be done to make sure that in the future Afghanistan is no longer a threat to the Afghans themselves, to neighbouring countries and to international security overall. Everything must be done in order to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Afghanistan, including putting an end to the shameful discrimination against women and girls. Everything must be done to restore to the Afghan people hope for a peaceful future and prosperity. Tajikistan is prepared, in cooperation with other concerned States, and with a central coordinating role for the United Nations, to assist Afghanistan, a country with a great history, to regain a worthy future and to restore its former attractive image in the eyes of the international community. We believe that determining the future of Afghanistan is the exclusive prerogative of the Afghan people themselves. One of the indispensable conditions for returning Afghanistan to a peaceful life is ending outside interference and uniting, under United Nations auspices, the efforts of the international community to accelerate the process of political settlement of the Afghan problem and the rehabilitation of the country. Furthermore, it is essential that all hotbeds of terrorism, elements of organized crime and the structures and — most importantly — the production potential of the drug business be eliminated in Afghanistan.

It goes without saying that the territorial integrity of Afghanistan must be guaranteed. Only the establishment of a freely chosen, effective, broad-based, politically balanced and multi-ethnic Afghan administration can guarantee peace and stability in the country. It also goes without saying that the Taliban movement as a political group has no place in a future Afghan administration since this could be fraught with the danger of the recurrence of terrorism and the drug trade in Afghanistan.

We are profoundly concerned about the grave humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. The refusal of the Taliban regime to fulfil the demands of the anti-terrorist coalition to hand over the masterminds and organizers of the acts of terror in the United States has

resulted in new sufferings for the Afghan people and an increase in the numbers of refugees and displaced persons. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, among the 22 million refugees throughout the world, at least one out of six is an Afghan. According to the estimates of the humanitarian organizations, the drought that has continued for three years in Afghanistan has already resulted in the incredible impoverishment of the entire population, and military operations and the approaching winter have placed millions of Afghan people on the edge of extinction. The actual reality is such that the coming winter threatens millions of Afghans with death from starvation. Right after the beginning of the United States anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan, the Tajikistan Government issued a special decision expressing its readiness to open its airspace and related infrastructure for providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan who have been suffering from the Taliban tyranny for a long time. We call upon all Member States and humanitarian institutions and organizations to give all the necessary assistance to the people of Afghanistan without delay. If that is not done, then Afghanistan will become the scene of a horrendous humanitarian tragedy. It could cause a wave of instability in neighbouring States and in the region as a whole. We cannot allow that to happen.

The policy of drug production and export pursued by the Taliban regime can be described as a policy against humanity. It is sad that Afghanistan, one of the founding Members of the United Nations and one of the cradles of world civilization and culture, has now, through the fault of the Taliban regime, become one of the world's largest producers of lethal drugs. According to the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, the considerable decrease in the poppy crop in Afghanistan this year has not resulted in a reduction of illicit heroin trafficking, either to neighbouring countries or to Europe. Huge amounts of raw opium stored in the Taliban-controlled territory were used for heroin trafficking. The quantity of heroin that has been destroyed in Tajikistan this year alone is three times as much as last year, and this amounts to tons of this deadly product.

As a result of the tragic events of 11 September, a new situation has emerged in Afghanistan. The United Nations has been unable to continue assistance to the Afghan farmers and exercise control over drug production and trade. The Taliban movement, for whom, under the current circumstances, drug trafficking has become one of its major sources of income, took advantage of this situation. That has put an additional burden on neighbouring countries, such as Tajikistan, that are trying to block drug trafficking from Afghanistan. We understand that the drug threat emanating from Afghanistan can be eliminated only through a lasting peace settlement in the country and by establishing a new coalition government that would ensure fulfilment of all its international commitments. However, that will take time. For this reason we express our gratitude to the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention and to all donor States that are funding the anti-drug programmes implemented by the Office, and call upon them to increase their assistance to Tajikistan in its noble struggle against illicit flows of deadly substances from Afghanistan, a struggle that serves the interests of millions of people in various countries. We in Tajikistan attach great importance to this struggle and view it as an important contribution to combating international terrorism by depriving it of one of the main sources of its financial support.

The Millennium Summit and Millennium Assembly, which have become milestones in the international dialogue, identified globalization as the main challenge to the international community. There is no doubt that globalization, which is an objective economic process, provides unprecedented opportunities for accelerated development. At the same time, it is obvious that the benefits of globalization are distributed quite unequally, and the balance of benefits and costs is definitely in favour of the developed nations. The conclusion is obvious: for various reasons many developing countries and economies in transition run the serious risk of finding themselves on the sidelines, away from the mainstream development of civilization. Only by applying all available mechanisms of multilateral international institutions can we stop the widening gap in development and incomes between rich and poor countries that was caused by globalization, and prevent an increase in poverty, unequal access to advanced technologies, cross-border crime and the spread of hidden forms of discrimination in international trade.

As for Tajikistan, it faces the long-term problem of rebuilding a country that has been heavily damaged by civil strife. The Government is undertaking all possible measures to strengthen civil society, to

encourage economic recovery and to create favourable conditions for healthy and sustainable social and economic development. We hope that the participants in the Consultative Group Meeting for Tajikistan, held in Tokyo in May 2001, will fulfil their commitments to Tajikistan, which would enable us to channel additional resources to rehabilitation projects. That would increase employment and substantially reduce poverty. The problem of combating poverty will remain, in the short term, one of the priority tasks for the Government of Tajikistan. The targeted comprehensive programme that is currently being implemented in the country envisages, in particular, measures to create new jobs, to improve primary education, to ease access to loans and microcredits, and, what is particularly important, to enhance the development of rural regions. We are carefully studying the experience of other countries in combating poverty. The progress made by some States — in particular in China, our neighbour — is quite encouraging. However, the high level of external indebtedness of Tajikistan is a major obstacle in this regard. It also impedes post-conflict peace-building and poses a serious threat to social and economic stability in our country. We are convinced that in order to support the developing countries and economies in transition in combating poverty it is important for the international community to become more dynamic and flexible in easing the debt burden for our countries.

In recent years we have witnessed an increasing number of major natural and industrial disasters, including hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and forest fires. Human casualties and material losses caused by them have become a serious destabilizing factor. For two years running, Tajikistan has suffered as a result of a large-scale drought, unprecedented in the twentieth century. One third of our cotton and grain crops was destroyed by drought. Cattle farming and animal husbandry products have sharply declined. Shortages of water, including fresh water, have increased. We express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, to the United Nations specialized agencies and donor countries for their prompt and generous response to the appeal made by our President in connection with the unprecedented drought in the spring and summer of this year. The concerted collective response of the international community to natural disasters is evidence of the increasing effectiveness of the available international machinery in this regard. The United Nations has played an important role in developing them. The outcome of the United Nations International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction has shown the need to increasingly use national opportunities and to enhance international cooperation in this field.

In the context of globalization, natural and industrial disasters demand an appropriate global response. It is essential that the community of nations unite its efforts to prevent natural disasters and deal with their consequences by training personnel and exchanging experience and the results of scientific and applied research. That would also allow coordinated approaches to such global challenges as the greenhouse effect, the depletion of the ozone layer, endangered biodiversity and desertification. All these issues are directly linked to the problem of protecting the environment, a problem that is global by its very nature.

Among the environmental challenges of the twenty-first century, the problem of maintaining water equilibrium and access to fresh water is one of the most urgent. The population of earth is increasing, and the need for fresh water is also increasing, while natural water resources are not increasing. One out of six people on earth does not have access to fresh water today. The danger of the world's diminishing fresh water resources is quite evident: it represents a threat to the environment and to all life on earth. This tendency is not becoming less acute, and therefore Tajikistan, which possesses considerable water resources in Central Asia, greatly appreciates all efforts to deal with the problem of fresh water resources at all levels throughout the world. We are pleased that the initiative of the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rakhmonov, to proclaim 2003 the international year of fresh water has received wide-ranging support in the community of nations. We believe that the preparation and holding of events dedicated to the international year of fresh water, at both international and national levels, will help us all to find answers to the global challenges faced by mankind and to come closer to a solution to the strategic problem of providing access to fresh water to every person on earth.

With the beginning of the new century, the number of problems faced by mankind has not diminished. The entire history of the United Nations has demonstrated that the best way to deal with problems is through collective action, based on an agreed platform. We have such a platform: the Millennium Declaration adopted by our heads of State.

on a basis of global consensus, in the autumn of 2000. The task that lies before us, the United Nations, is to mobilize energy and resources to achieve our common goals in meeting the challenges of globalization. The peoples of our planet believe in the effectiveness of our Organization. We should not fail to meet their hopes and expectations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Serbini Ali, Chairman of the delegation of Brunei Darussalam.

Mr. Serbini (Brunei Darussalam): On behalf of His Majesty's Government, I should like to express once again my warmest congratulations to the President on his election and our appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I would also like to congratulate the Secretary-General on his re-election. We are extremely pleased that he is continuing to serve the United Nations. The award of this year's Nobel Peace Prize is a fine tribute to his work and to the United Nations agencies and workers in the field, who have served us all with such dedication to the principles of the Charter.

Sadly, of course, this comes at a time when their work is perhaps more crucial than ever before. The atrocities committed in the United States on 11 September have rightly received the absolute condemnation of all civilized people. There is no justification for terrorism. As we have stated both individually and in our regional associations, Brunei Darussalam will continue to do all it can to work closely with the United States and all members of the Security Council to play its part in overcoming the direct challenge that terrorism poses to the proper conduct of international affairs.

The existence of terrorism is, however, a grim reminder that the United Nations agenda, set over the last half of the twentieth century, has yet to be completed. There are many unwelcome legacies from the past 50 years. Though none justify acts of terror, many offer justification for deep resentment and profound despair. Perhaps the most apparent of all at this time is the situation in Palestine, where the justice implicit in the Security Council's resolutions on Palestine is still denied to what is now a third generation of Palestinians. In this respect, we welcome the recognition given by many world leaders, including the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, to the principle of a Palestinian State. Brunei Darussalam hopes that all concerned and interested parties involved in the Middle East peace process will act with urgency in order to bring this about.

As we all know, dispelling feelings of past injustice is an extremely difficult task. In essence, we believe it must involve new approaches to security. We believe all members of all regional associations have a crucial role in this. Brunei Darussalam is trying to do this through the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum in an approach that has been taking shape over nearly a decade now. This involves all the nations of South-East Asia and our partners in North America, East Asia, Europe and Oceania. We seek common understandings through consultation and various confidence-building measures. Members have recognized the complex nature of modern conflict. They have accepted that its roots are often deep and intricately entwined. As elsewhere in the world, it can be the result of long-standing territorial claims, centuries-old animosities and instinctive suspicions or conflicting ideologies. Or it can be as basic as local land disputes or simple lack of basic resources.

Whatever the cause, however, the members believe the Forum is seeing signs of success. This year, for example, it has been able to move things another stage forward and is now looking into the very challenging area of preventive diplomacy. In short, the members see dialogue and consultation not as a series of meetings but as a process. As such, it may never end. In fact, in the long run, the process itself may indeed become the solution.

That, we think, is the framework within which the ideas expressed at the Millennium Summit can be pursued successfully. In short, we believe that the key to security today is the capacity to think locally, regionally and globally at the same time. To us this means that a positive, forward-looking United Nations is crucial. It is here that all these thoughts can truly come together. It is here that all nations can renew and strengthen the tolerance and friendship that are the real building blocks of security.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau, Chairman of the delegation of Viet Nam.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam): I am again the last speaker of the day, but I am happy because it gives me a little extra time to congratulate the President on the effective manner in which he is conducting the work of the session, which gives us every reason to believe that it will be steered to a fruitful conclusion.

I wish also to extend our heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the families of the plane crash victims of yesterday. Let us pray that it had nothing to do with terrorist acts, as the tragic events of 11 September alone were more than enough to bring to the fore the fight against terrorism as one of the top priorities of the United Nations and the international community. Cognizant of the distinction between terrorism and the struggle to exercise a people's right to self-determination, Viet Nam persistently condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, which takes a heavy toll of innocent lives. We fully support the international endeavour and cooperation to ensure world peace, stability and security in full conformity with the United Nations Charter and with fundamental principles of international law, particularly those respecting national independence and sovereignty. No individual country can go solo or have double standards in this fight. While members of the international community must act in a responsible manner by not tolerating, nurturing and/or supporting terrorists on their soil, they should also bring the terrorists to justice or extradite them to the country where their crimes were committed, so that they can be duly punished.

Though combating international terrorism has become the pressing task of the day, it must not overshadow the challenges of the twenty-first century. Poverty, the widened development gap, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the deteriorating environment, regional tensions and conflicts, all point to the potential instability of the world today, as mentioned by our leaders a year ago. The Summit Declaration, in reflecting the genuine wishes and resolve of the world's peoples, vigorously reconfirmed the values and principles of the Charter, defining the priority objectives of the United Nations and the international community for the years to come, thus becoming our platform, our programme of action for the new millennium. To implement the Declaration at the global level, the United Nations last year conducted numerous activities, including the organization of a series of special sessions in the economic, social and security fields. The international organizations in the United Nations system — such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) — are actively coordinating with nations to incorporate in their national programmes the specific objectives set forth in the Summit Declaration. This is a significant start which should be further promoted, as the most pressing challenge to us all is how to eradicate poverty on a global scale. In this spirit we wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who started his second term in office with the Nobel Peace Prize. We are fully convinced that the Secretary-General will continue to contribute to the cause of all nations and peoples.

Against the backdrop of globalization spearheaded by the information technology revolution, the other side of international political and economic life has been further exposed. The gap between rich and poor has widened further, and adverse circumstances in international relations have emerged, further underscoring the disadvantage and vulnerability of the developing countries. The Secretary-General once said words to the effect that poverty and the gap between rich and poor are the seeds of instability and precarious development, and that today's main challenge is how to ensure that globalization becomes the driving force of development instead of leaving a billion people in abject poverty. A common concern at present, however, is the tendency towards decreasing official development assistance (ODA), particularly the decrease in contributions to the development organizations in the United Nations system, which will surely hamper their activities. More than ever before, the United Nations, the international community, the developed countries in particular, should further assist the developing countries in the eradication of poverty, disease and illiteracy, and facilitate their fuller and equitable participation in international economic life.

Development requires an environment of peace and stability. But complex implications arising from the conflicts in some parts of the world and the possible intensification of an arms race, are not conducive to development at all. Of particular concern is the escalation of violence in the Middle East. We join the community of world peoples calling for an

early end to violence, the resumption of peaceful negotiations for a just, long-lasting solution in which the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the legitimate rights of all parties concerned, would be guaranteed. By the same token, the embargoes imposed upon Cuba, Iraq and Libya, which cause untold suffering to these peoples, should be lifted so as to enable them to concentrate their energy and efforts on national reconstruction and development.

This year, South-East Asia has witnessed certain complex developments, but peace, stability and cooperation remain the burning aspiration of our peoples and continue to be the main tendency. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries are determined to build a zone of peace, development and prosperity and to coordinate efforts to effectively cope with regional and global challenges. In that context, the success of the 34th Ministerial Meeting, the eighth ASEAN Regional Forum held in Hanoi last August and the ASEAN Summit held in Brunei Darussalam in early November, all contributed to establishing priorities and effective measures for the future of this region. These meetings reaffirmed ASEAN's determination to further promote solidarity, cooperation, dialogue and mutual understanding within ASEAN, and between ASEAN countries and their dialogue partners, especially China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, for the peaceful settlement of their differences on the basis of respect for fundamental principles and norms of international law, particularly those regarding consensus and non-interference in the internal affairs of others. The Hanoi Declaration on Narrowing the Development Gap for Closer ASEAN Integration and other important documents were adopted on confidence-building and the promotion of mutual understanding for peace and stability in South-East Asia, as well as in Asia and the Pacific. They welcomed the promising progress in the ASEAN-China consultation regarding a code of conduct in the Eastern Sea, reaffirming those principles of the 1992 ASEAN Manila Declaration on the settlement of conflicting claims of territorial sovereignty in the Eastern Sea. We sincerely hope that the United Nations and the international community, in line with the Millennium Declaration, will deliver active support and assistance to the implementation of our regional cooperation for peace, stability and development in the region and throughout the world.

In the course of 15 years of rebuilding, Viet Nam has recorded great achievements in all fields. The ninth Party Congress has drawn necessary lessons from our own experiences, reaffirmed our resolve to continue the course, stepping up industrialization and modernization programmes, and mapping out the socio-economic development strategy for the years 2001 to 2010. While trying to bring into full play our inner strength, we will create more favourable conditions to attract investment and expand further effective cooperation with foreign partners and countries. We will continue to pursue our foreign policy of independence, openness, international economic integration, friendship and trusted partnership with all countries in the international community in the endeavour for peace, independence and development.

The Millennium Summit and its Declaration provided us with a momentum in the new millennium, which should be maintained through the active implementation of the guidelines unanimously endorsed by our leaders. The United Nations and each Member State should make efforts to achieve those objectives.

In order to contribute effectively to the common cause, the United Nations should speed up the process of reform, renovation and democratization. Viet Nam fully supports the central role of the General Assembly, the highest representative body of the whole membership, and the reform and expansion of the Security Council in both the non-permanent and permanent categories. The developing countries should have fuller representation and participation in the Council's decision-making. But it is of the utmost importance that the United Nations should design measures to concentrate resources for development and the eradication of poverty and for the other major objectives included in the Millennium Declaration. It is the expectation of the whole membership that the United Nations should become a worthy world body, operating in a more effective manner in the interests of all countries and for a just, humanistic and better world in the new millennium. We believe that the United Nations will surely live up to this expectation and Viet Nam pledges to contribute actively to this common endeavour.

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.